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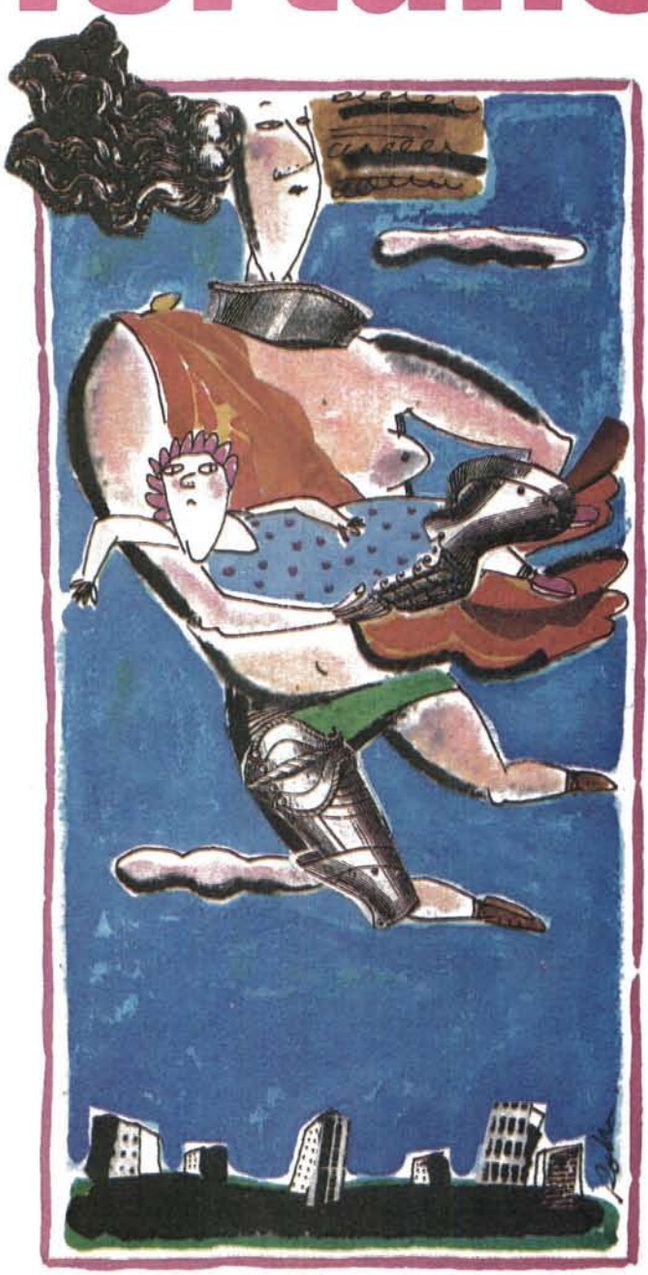
Family fortunes



Mrs Thatcher is soon going to act on the family. Will Britain's new moralists inject their hysterical demands into No 10's new family agenda?

The Age of Lead: a Margaret Atwood short story

Alistair Darling and Conor Gearty: what's wrong with a bill of rights

R W Johnson and Stuart Weir on the Ridley affair

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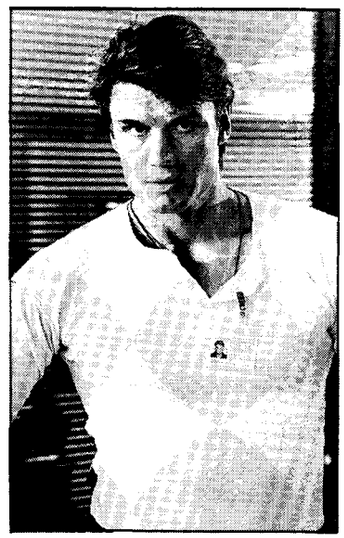

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Civil defence

With German-Soviet friendship sealed, we now need to build a counterweight to Nato

In Britain this week, the militant miners' union struck again. Ethnic violence flared in Belfast, Glasgow and Liverpool. Yorkshire declared itself independent, reserving the right to raise an army and join the Warsaw Pact. (Devon and Cornwall did the same months ago.) At the Tory conference, the wets walked out and Michael Heseltine tore up his party card. Then the shops ran out of tea. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister had the chance to make a deal with the country's mightiest neighbour that would save her face, defuse a foreign threat, and let her start to stop the rot at home. Of course, she would have to make concessions first. At such a time, would she act heavy and wave a big stick?

After a few days when all of that, and more, hit him, Mikhail Gorbachev chose not to. His pact with Helmut Kohl on German membership of Nato, swiftly followed by the wartime powers' consent to unification, opens a precious breathing space for an ailing ex-superpower. As British bulldogs (tribe of Benn, as well as tribe of Ridley) fretted over the bullying Boche, the unloved Kohl shook Moscow's hand—and slipped over 5 billion Deutschmarks of credit and a fat cheque for the Soviet forces' last years on German soil. What propelled him was the noblest motive a politician can possess: the need to win an election.

When that all-German poll arrives, on 2 December, Europe will be in the throes of a sort of staggered Treaty of Versailles that should, if our luck holds, put a full stop to the cold-war era. The winding-up of the "two plus four" talks with an agreement on German unity in September could coincide with an east-west deal in Vienna on reducing non-nuclear forces. Then comes the 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Paris; next, the European Community summit on political and monetary union; a shade later, a full-dress German-Soviet treaty.

At home, the first task presented by this latest scenario is to curb our rulers' antique passion for fresh hardware. The Bonn-Moscow axis now in place knocks one more strut from the government's "modernise our nukes" platform. With a nuclear-free Germany now politically feasible (and Nato affiliation alone should not prevent it) the missile-fetishists have to fall back on spectres of mad mullahs on the loose or resurrected Leonid Brezhnevs. Neither fantasy sounds like part of a serious defence debate. If Mrs Thatcher really wants to help save Gorbachev, she can withdraw ammunition from the Stalinists by dropping plans for new Tridents and TASMs (tactical air-to-surface missiles).

The German-Soviet embrace might also shake the world-view of anti-Atlanticists, in CND and elsewhere. What to do with Nato remains the toughest question for its heretics and non-believers. On the left, the old dream of simultaneous extinction for both blocs is dead. The Warsaw Pact has withered, as per the script; but not Nato, for all the emollient words at this month's London summit. Without a counter-vailing force, it could stonewall new thinking on European security for years to come. In themselves, defence cuts by its member nations will not erode the alliance's strategic doctrine. Watch out soon for a revival of the slogan: "nuclear arms are cleaner, cheaper and better value than squaddies."

What of the alternative groupings that might help cut the demob-dodging generals down to size? The idea of a "European Security Community" is touted in some Brussels corridors as a route to *rapprochement* between the EC and Nato. That could become a mid-Atlantic corporatist nightmare richly deserving of a Ridley-flavoured rant. A Community army with strings pulled in Washington is a vision of the worst of all possible worlds.

That leaves the pan-European CSCE, every peacenik's favourite bet for a harmonious continent from Lisbon to Lvov. The Nato diehards already have it in their sights. Between now and November we will hear much of how its puny authority and snail-like deliberation by consensus (a month in Copenhagen, for instance, to reach a bland declaration on human rights) rule it out as a possible mediator in European disputes.

Well, give it a proper executive, rather than the present fund of goodwill and midnight oil, and it might start to show its paces. No other body (save the non-governmental Helsinki Citizens' Assembly) speaks for the security concerns of east and west in Europe. No other carries with it the hopes of last year's middle-European revolutionaries for an escape from the bloc-bound mentality. Without its own planes or platoons, CSCE courts dismissal as another tedious talking-shop. But as we will soon discover, peacemaking can be very boring indeed. Boring, that is, if the prospect of imminent mass death has been your idea of fun.

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Letting go of nurse

Britain, Iraq and Zambia have between them engineered the release of the British nurse Daphne Parish, who was imprisoned by Iraq during the Farzad Barzoft affair. That's a wonderful result—but the process by which it has been achieved doesn't reflect well on any of the parties.

Saddam Hussein, probably the nastiest dictator in the middle east—but one whose nastiness was only discovered by our government and media when he messed with *our* interests—is being rehabilitated with the same indecent haste that briefly demonised him. Kenneth Kaunda, by contrast, is a decent but perpetually naïve man, who seems genuinely bewildered by his country's descent into chaos and corruption. But to hear him sing the praises of the Baghdad butcher is as unedifying as it is to see the British foreign office turn its disapproval on and off like a tap. Were British promises about future economic aid part of the deal? Where does Tiny Rowland's Lonhro, which owns the *Observer*, virtually owns Zambia and has interests in Iraq too, fit into the picture? We should be told.

Kaunda propounds a pretentious philosophy of "humanism"; but for a humanist he chooses some strange friends. They have included, beside Rowland and Hussein, Nicolae Ceausescu and Erich Honecker. He has been seen to break down and weep in the middle of a speech about man's inhumanity to man in South Africa and Idi Amin's Uganda. But in true Ceausescu style he has warned those calling for him to resign that "the party and the forces of law and order will be tough with anyone, including children." He has been known to suddenly change policy and re-shuffle his cabinet even before his ministers have settled down from the last press conference. His action over Daphne Parish is entirely in keeping with his penchant for the grand moral gesture coming from nowhere in particular.

But of the two rulers, Hussein is indubitably the worst. No doubt he expects a pay-off from the Parish affair. But of course, Britain never does deals with kidnappers.

The dead centre

On his arrival in the United States, Neil Kinnock noted with satisfaction that, "We in the Labour Party are part of the mainstream. That is probably the main difference between ourselves and the Tories." It was an extraordinary comment for a Labour leader. Kinnock has emerged through the looking glass into a world in which his party has become the champion of traditional conservative values, preserving what is supposedly best in society, while adapting to change. President Bush gave him a warm reception, not because he is more polite than Ronald Reagan, but because Kinnock has dispensed with the policies that scuppered his trip to Washington in 1987.

Shadow chancellor John Smith had already crossed the Atlantic three months earlier, brandishing Labour's new commitment to the "market economy". Kinnock peppered his speech to the US Council for Foreign Affairs with tributes to Nato and its move into "a political gear". He called for a new Marshall Plan for Eastern Europe—an unpopular notion with his American hosts—but placed the burden of responsibility on EC countries. Nor was he giving away something for nothing: the quest needed only to "stimulate morale" by supplying a "small part" of the sums necessary to create a mixed economy in return for binding trade agreements.

It was a smooth performance by the Labour leader, in which his unabashed Atlanticism was tempered by his enthusiasm for the dawn of "one Europe". The *Daily Mail* managed to unearth the inevitable "Kinnock gaffe" story, but was diffident enough to bury it on page 10. When Kinnock placed Labour firmly in the "mainstream", he naturally hoped to imply that the western world was coming round to the party's way of thinking. The truth, of course, is the opposite.

Rights of passage

Between 1982 and 1988 more people left Britain to live in the Caribbean than made the reverse journey. That fact might suggest that immigration policy now has little impact on Britain's Caribbean population. But, as the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants points out in a report published this week, a new problem is emerging. Black families here, now into their third UK generation, sometimes want to invite relatives to come and stay—for weddings or funerals, perhaps. That reasonable desire is thwarted, because the immigration service is "clamping down" on visitors from the Caribbean. Trinidadians are 18 times as likely to be refused entry as they were five years ago, Barbadians 15 times, and Jamaicans 10 times.

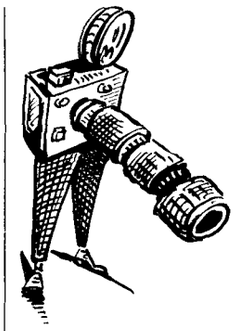
The immigration service continues to operate on the ludicrous assumption that Caribbeans are under "pressure to emigrate". This means that immigration officers pay closer attention to black people than white ones; they thus detect more alleged "bogus visitors"; generate higher refusal statistics for blacks; and reinforce the "pressure to emigrate" myth. The Commission for Racial Equality pointed out the circularity five years ago (and it wasn't the first to do so)—but the problem has simply got worse.

There is another factor. As we revealed last year, internal immigration service documents show a new practice of "targeting specific areas of abuse with long term objectives such as policy and legislative changes in mind". In plain language this means that if immigration officers concentrate on kicking out Jamaicans, they can get the Jamaican statistics up, and then go to ministers with "proof" that there is a problem with Jamaicans, and that new laws against them are needed. Thus policy is created by junior civil servants who need to justify their existence, and black Britons wonder if they will ever be accepted as part of the community.

Duff notes

The trouble with business sponsorship of the arts is that the men in suits prefer *Don Giovanni* to Derek Jarman: the worthy but unadventurous flourishes at the expense of the innovative. Actually, this piece of conventional wisdom is only half true: a market research report by Mintel claims that this "Mozart factor" is in decline, as companies seek out sponsorship deals that will set them apart from their competitors. Even so, 75 per cent of business sponsorship still goes on music, almost all of it classical.

A report published this week by the Policy Studies Institute, *Cultural Trends in the Eighties*, puts all this in context. Sponsorship only accounts for 0.3 per cent of all expenditure on cultural goods and services, and seems to have levelled off. For individual organisations, it fluctuates so wildly from year to year that it makes planning almost impossible. Besides, says the PSI: "experience in the United States suggests that sponsorship can be highly susceptible to economic downturns." Another symbol of the Thatcher era proves to be a chimera.



Calcutt Watch, part one: "journalists should not photograph individuals on private property without their consent," says Mr Calcutt's new code, "unless it is necessary for the purpose of detecting or exposing crime or serious anti-social conduct, protecting public health or safety, or preventing the public from being misled by some public statement or action of an individual." So the photographers encamped this week at Ridley Towers, Gloucestershire, were ethically beyond the pale. Important to get these things straight.

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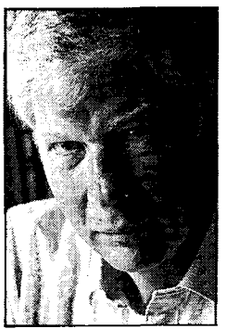
POLITICAL COLUMN

Ritual slaughter

Ridley has gone. But he was half right as well as half wrong about Germany and the EC



R W Johnson

The Ridley affair which dominated last week was in a sense a storm in a teacup. If Dominic Lawson hadn't switched his tape recorder on, there would have been no affair. And really all that happened was that an elderly Tory gent indulged in some saloon bar politics over lunch. But a mighty taboo has been broken, so the tribe broke into a dance of ritual horror on every side—which can only end when the body of the taboo-violator is thrown to the braves for them to trample. We have seen such rituals a thousand times before, but nothing ever seems quite to lessen the quivering state of righteous outrage MPs and journalists get into on such occasions.

Moustachioed Tory backbenchers mouth excitedly before the cameras: sense of responsibility, nice chap but, questions being asked, 1922. Opposition leaders mouth ritual indignation: scandal, disgrace, prime minister involved, world demands to know. And journalists mouth: mounting anger here tonight, deep shock felt, judgment questioned, liquid lunch. Finally, the taboo-violator is sacrificed by the chief and the ritual death dance can stop.

The affair revealed a number of interesting things. One is just how poor is Mrs Thatcher's political judgment. We are consistently being told by John Cole that she is "a politician to her fingertips" but this is not really true at all: both her sense of long-term strategy and her short-term political sensitivity are singularly crude and dull. She has kept up a barrage of resistance to moves towards European monetary and institutional integration, but once she'd lent her support to the passage of the Single European Act and accepted the Madrid conditions for sterling's entry to the ERM, the strategic pass on Europe had been well and truly sold. In typically dishonest fashion she now tries to pass off these phenomena as something Sir Geoffrey Howe somehow did on his own. The implication of her Bruges speech was that she should not have signed or agreed to such things, but sign and agree she certainly did.

Nonetheless, Thatcher and Ridley kept the pro-Europeans at bay until the spring when the full enormity of the poll tax broke upon the public view, resulting in a quantum leap in government unpopularity, the sudden boom in Heseltine shares, and a collapse of sterling to $1.58. A further—and politically calamitous—rise in interest rates loomed. Suddenly Mrs Thatcher had her back against the wall, with the betting no more than evens that she would get through a leadership contest in the autumn.

It was while Mrs Thatcher was cowering in her bunker that the Hurd-Major axis was stealthily formed and then extended to include the Bank of England. These three parties then combined to talk the pound up all the way to $1.80 with repeated assurances that ERM entry was not far distant. Mrs Thatcher was in no position to argue with this novel means of propping up the currency without a further hike in interest rates —but it gradually dawned that she was now cornered into accepting early ERM entry if she was not to be responsible for another sterling collapse. As the government improved in the polls, the prime minister regained her old assertiveness and started laying about her in confused fashion for a new right-wing political agenda. In that new mood, Downing Street began to reflect with some bitterness that the poll tax had effectively cost the anti-Europeans another—and this time crucial—round. The exasperation at this slide towards European integration found inevitable form in dislike of the too-powerful Germans.

Ridley is right about the Commissioners being reject politicians and the irresponsible European parliament

Only a few months ago, after all, Mrs Thatcher was insisting that German reunification was still (and should remain) a distant prospect and that the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons in Germany would go ahead. Kohl has simply swept her aside on both counts and Bush has rubbed salt in her wounds by making it clear that the special US relationship is now with Bonn. This looks like an uncomfortable foretaste of what life for Britain will be like within an integrated Europe. But there is not too much Mrs Thatcher can do: on this issue she has been marginalised internationally and even within her own cabinet. The exasperation anti-Europeans feel at the losing hand they now have to play is keenly felt by Thatcher—and was explosively voiced by Ridley.

Thatcher demonstrated what poor short-term political sense she has by extracting a retraction from Ridley and trying to tough it out in the Commons. We have seen this hasty over-estimate of her own powers to withstand political storms over and over again. No, she insisted, Cecil Parkinson would not be resigning over the Sarah Keays affair. Within a week he was gone. No, Leon Brittan would not resign over Westland. Within days she had thrown him to the wolves. No, Edwina Currie would not resign over salmonella. Soon she was gone. Now it was Ridley's turn to be first hotly defended—and then hastily persuaded into resignation. Someone who really was "a politican to their fingertips" would not give such frequent demonstrations that her hand can easily be forced, that the lady *is* for turning.

But the worst of Thatcher's dilemma is that *as things stand* Ridley is right to worry about the rise of German hegemony. He is quite right about the Commissioners being reject politicians, about the irresponsible European parliament, and about the weak popular authority of the central EC institutions. But what he and Mrs Thatcher don't see is that if you decide to go for a single market on the one hand, and weak institutions on the other, German hegemony will be the inevitable result. If you don't want that, then you must build stronger central institutions—you must go the whole hog towards not only monetary integration but to a European cabinet responsible to the European parliament, perhaps to an elected president of Europe. German hegemony would then be dissolved into a greater whole rather as the hegemony of the south east is dissolved into the wider political entity of Britain; a partial dissolution in either case, but the best option open.

That is, if you don't like the results of partial European integration, the only remedy you now have left is complete European political and economic integration. This logic may be enough to make Ridley splutter with anger over his drink, but it is also the logic that he and Mrs Thatcher have been unthinkingly backing towards since the EC referendum of 1975. But one somehow doubts that it will much assuage their feelings now to realise that Powell and Foot were right about sovereignty after all.

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TAKING LIBERTIES

Jolyon Jenkins

Who are the villains of the Maguire Seven case? Who's to blame for the Seven's decade of wrongful imprisonment, convicted of "possessing explosives for an unlawful purpose"?

Sir John May, whose interim report on the affair was published last week, has no doubts: the culprits are the forensic scientists at RARDE, the Royal Armament Research and Development Establishment, who provided virtually the only evidence against the Seven. May accuses them, in effect, of ignoring whatever is the forensic scientist's equivalent of the Hippocratic Oath, by cooking their results.

But to a non-lawyer and non-scientist (like myself) the May report makes unsettling reading. It's like trying to follow a game when no one will tell you what the rules are. Worse, there seem to be two sets of rules: legal, and scientific. Are the men from RARDE in trouble because they used the right rules for the wrong game? Are they being made scapegoats for the fact that the rules contradict each other? Or is there something more sinister afoot? The answers, in the order given, are "maybe", "yes", and "yes".

May makes an enormous meal of the "Thin Layer Chromatography" (TLC) test, which was applied to samples taken from the suspects' hands and fingernails. The TLC test, the RARDE scientists said, shows up the presence of the explosive nitroglycerine *and nothing else*. But this was not true: a positive reading can be triggered by another substance, "PETN". The prosecution scientists knew this but didn't mention it. The defence scientist knew, but had forgotten. May says that, since the charge was that the Seven had handled nitroglycerine, the ambiguity of the test totally undermines the prosecution case.

But PETN *is also an explosive*—moreover, one which is almost unknown in Britain. The likelihood of the Maguires making PETN bombs was even less than that of them making nitroglycerine bombs. For the scientists, and in real life, PETN was a red herring. Only in the context of the legal rules was it so important.

There were other scientific misdeeds: they concealed new tests that neither confirmed nor refuted the TLC tests and they introduced hokum anecdotal evidence about the reliability of the TLC procedure. Really, their crime was to go native—to identify themselves too strongly with the prosecution case.

But this is a problem inherent in the discipline. Forensic scientists from both sides, sharing a drink, could probably reach agreement on most points. The adversary system of justice forces them to magnify their differences. In the Maguire case, the prosecution delayed handing over their scientific notes to the defence "for security reasons". But equally, defence lawyers shop around for scientists who will back up their case; and don't like to use the facilities at RARDE because the results would have to be disclosed to the prosecution. This is a travesty of classic scientific method. But it's not the fault of individual scientists.

By blaming RARDE, May has managed to acquit the Seven, but on a technicality a child could see through. It may satisfy the lawyers, and it seems to have satisfied the newspapers, but it wouldn't satisfy Hercule Poirot, and it doesn't satisfy me. If there were explosives found on the swabs, and the Maguires didn't put them there, *who did*? Until May pursues this question, justice won't have been done.

116·16·7·90~ "GO-GO RIDLEY - PART 2" ©Steve Bell 1990~

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DIARY

On Bastille Day last year, I sat till late at night cross-legged in the Champs-Elysées, entranced by Jean-Paul Goode's magnificent parade in celebration of the Bicentennial of 1789 and all that. It was a joyous day to be part of the crowd. Mrs Thatcher was of course in Paris too: a figure of ridicule, an English version of Dame Edna Average—a Mrs Grantham, so to speak—self-importantly engaged in lecturing the continentals on the superior qualities of British democracy. For a few days at least she became the symbol of the English boor abroad.

Stuart Weir

How curious that Bastille Day this year was dominated by the messy crisis inspired by yet another English boor, Nicholas Ridley, whose command of chauvinistic rhetoric rivals that of the English football hooligans. Curious, too, how the liberal press take pride in the outspoken qualities of such boors. Last year, the *Observer* remarked: "She may not be tactful, but at least she is honest... Mrs Thatcher has never seen the need to curry favour, not least with the French." We had much the same tosh this time round, with the *Sunday Correspondent*'s David Lipsey, for example, praising Ridley as "a man of passionately held views" and an editorial saying, "It has been a splendid *affaire* with all the contradictions that make English society so endearing to outsiders: the bumbling and unpredictable minor aristocrat tapping into a populist vein of national feeling . . . "

Really? It looks more to me more like an *affaire* which has revealed the depths of xenophobic feeling in the *upper* echelons of English society. Dominic Lawson celebrated his coup in the *Spectator* with an editorial note entitled, "Germany calling". Mrs Thatcher's taxonomy of the "German character" seemed at first one of the purest examples of personal projection ever seen in public life. By the middle of this week it was obvious that she was standing proxy for a right atavistically obsessed by the last war which now feels betrayed by history; and this is precisely the right which in the 1930s stood ready to deal with Hitler.

I spent this Bastille Day as part of a smaller crowd at the Friends Meeting House in Euston. It was the first public gathering organised by Charter 88 and was fully booked weeks in advance. About 650 people came together to discuss how to frame a written constitution for the peoples of the United Kingdom, an enterprise which of course first demands that citizens should determine together what kind of society they wish to live in. An "earnest" occasion, as Peter Jenkins described it (no doubt mockingly) in the *Independent*; but frequently joyous too, largely because of the practical optimism of the people there.

We were all outsiders to the kind of society the *Correspondent* was celebrating. For the sovereignty which Ridley and Thatcher seek to defend from the Germans and Europe is not a popular sovereignty, but the *ancien régime* of 1688 and all that. What they want to preserve is the power of government to use the House of Commons to frustrate and distort the popular will, not a democratic assembly. And for all that he has to say about the democratic deficiencies of the EC, Ridley has gone willingly enough into secret conclave in Brussels.

The European parliament is powerless, as Ridley asserts. But its members at least recognise the fact and are beginning to frame a new democratic constitution for Europe. Our MPs belong to an equally powerless assembly, but glory in the pompous show and kowtow to the government managers. Few parliamentarians have the courage to speak out against the rotten state of the House of Commons, but at the day's first session on Saturday I introduced two who have done so: Robin Cook, who magnificently rubbished the whole idea of parliamentary sovereignty, and Richard Shepherd, who became a Tory MP because he believed in "freedom" and obstinately continues to do so. I mentioned that Shepherd was a contemporary of Mick Jagger at the LSE and he won the first cheer of the day with the remark, "I am not against the sixties."

The debate on a written constitution was supposed to be confined to a small hot room, but the participants picked up fine antique benches from the corridors and took them out into the sunny courtyard. Jim Ross, author of "The Scottish Claim of Right", advised Charter 88 to give priority to power rather than to rights and Bill (R W) Johnson, squinting into the sun, argued strongly against establishing a Speakers' conference to determine constitutional change. It would be the kiss of death, he said, to let the old parliamentary élite decide what was to happen.

The morning had a satisfying Athenian feel to it. I sat on the rim of a small circular fountain in the middle of the courtyard, watching finny goldfish mooch idly like pink-bellied Pekingese among the waving grasses in the pool. An occasional gust of wind caught the fountain and a faint spray smudged my notes. Nicola Lacey, a legal academic, had taken Ross on, arguing that rights were about the distribution of power.

A young man declared that Charter 88 ought to behave as the group had done, and take the constitutional debate out into the sun. And somehow the day seemed to take a growingly republican air, with people arguing for the election of judges and novelist Ian McEwan calmly urging the Charter to discuss the idea of a Royal Family of bikes, Walkmans and tea-towels, subject to the rule of law like everyone else. "I know there's the assumption that we can't take this issue on. But unless this magic taboo is challenged and is discussed, then our political culture can't grow up." The man from the *Sunday Times* almost wet his pants in excitement, but no doubt due to Ridley, failed to get a word into the next day's paper.

It put me in mind of Peter Jenkins's grudging acknowledgement of the influence that Charter 88 has had, especially in the Labour Party. The Charter has had the air, he wrote, of "another broad-leftist front with the purpose of advancing the same old socialist struggle". In fact, it is hard to think of a more politically promiscuous movement than Charter 88: among the active conspirators, for example, are Anthony Barnett, Lord Scarman, Paul Hirst, David Marquand, Marina Warner, Richard (now Lord) Holmes, Hilary Wainwright, Salman Rushdie, Neil Belton, Margaret Drabble. The trouble is that Jenkins sees politics through 2D spectacles and can only interpret Charter 88 in terms of two-party politics. Charter 88's strength and weakness is that it is outside that conventional political realm.

ROGER WODDIS

Don't Let's Be Beastly to Nick Ridley

(With apologies to Noël Coward)

Don't let's be beastly to Nick Ridley,
Who expressed unbridled hatred for the Hun.
Though he used the kind of language
Every diplomat deplores,
He was only playing *forte*
What is felt by Her Indoors.
Let's all rise to him,
When waving our goodbyes to him,
And weep when he fires the suicidal gun.
Let's treat the chap with charity,
Regretting his vulgarity,
But don't think that he's the only one.

Don't let's pretend the man was tiddly,
Or suggest his ghastly gaffe was all in fun.
If his words had been more measured,
As he readily admits,
He'd have not dismayed the Government
And given them the shits.
Wave a flag for him,
And light another fag for him,
Denying his awful blunder takes the bun.
Let's weigh the gain and loss in it,
And say he's dropped the Boss in it,
But don't rubbish Labour's favourite son.

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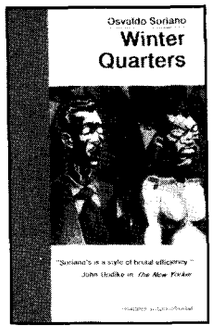

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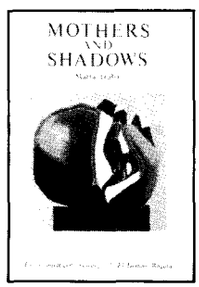

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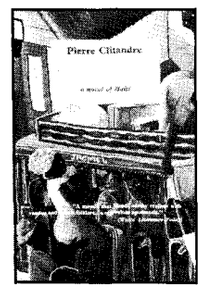

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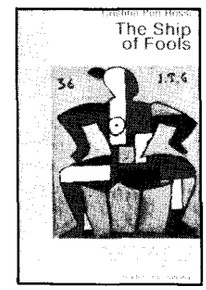

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Family of man

The moral right wants women to belong to men again. Will its hysteria win Mrs Thatcher's ear? Ros Coward reports

The protest by lesbian and gay activists at the 16th International Congress for the Family in Brighton last week was peculiarly apt; the hidden agenda in speech after speech was a ferocious fear of what was called (without so much as a flicker of remorse) the abnormal, the deviant and the unnatural. The only pity was that the target for the first protest was the person with the greatest publicity value, Princess Diana. She was rendered by the extreme illiberality of her surroundings into what for her must be an interesting new persona, that of a liberal intellectual.

At one level there was nothing exceptional about this congress. The moral right, including groups like Life and the National Housewives Association, has organised many previous conferences, where calls to outlaw abortion, for women to return to their traditional mothering roles and for an end to sex education are pretty commonplace. But this conference had some significant differences.

Its bland early publicity helped it to attract a wide range of organisations and individuals, including the Salvation Army and the Archbishop of Canterbury. And it pulled off the fairly major publicity coup of (nearly) getting Princess Diana and Mother Teresa on the same platform. The result was a much bigger and more public affair, where the usual battalions of ferocious senior citizens were joined by hordes of schoolgirls who cheered the thoroughly modern Princess Diana and gathered up handfuls of gory anti-abortion literature with equal relish.

The conference was organised by the World Organisation for the Family, whose president, Mercedes Wilson, and vice-president, Christine Vollmer, are both active in anti-abortion pro-family organisations in Latin America. The last few congresses were in Vienna, Bonn and Paris. But it was the first of its kind on British soil and the timing was exquisite, coinciding with the period leading up to the production of the new Tory Manifesto. The organisers would have known this, but they could not have known quite how crucial a time this is for "the family" in Britain. All shades of the political spectrum are beginning to talk about the need for new policies to respond to a perceived crisis created by escalating divorce rates, the increase in illegitimacy and single-parent families, and demographic changes making women's labour more essential.

It has become increasingly clear, as the debate about women's work and childcare has hotted up, that there are very real tensions within the the Tory Party about how and if to legislate for the family. Divisions over whether or not to help mothers return to work are particularly marked. There are signs, for example, that some high-flying Tory women were blocked in their attempts to formulate policy which would help low-income women find work. Thatcher herself has gone on record as "not wanting to be responsible for the crèche generation".

Ostensibly at least, this latest conference was pitched at a crisis in "spiritual and moral values", but it had more than an eye to the possibility that its words might reach the circles where policy is formulated. A spokesman described the conference as "trying to move forward from just talking about the situation. We want to find practical solutions." And there is certainly evidence that the organisers have the ear, if not yet the heart and mind of the government. A letter

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from Angela Rumbold, a junior government minister, shows that she met two of the conference's speakers, Valerie Riches and Katarina Runske, and passed on their views to Professor Brian Griffiths. Griffiths is part of the No 10 Policy Unit and is to domestic and social policy what Alan Walters was to economic. She wrote, "Thank you so much for the interesting meeting that I had with you and Mrs Katarina Runske the other day... I enjoyed it enormously and I have since spoken with Professor Brian Griffiths, who was also taken with Mrs Runske's findings."

The prospect of women like Riches and Runske winning the heart of No 10 is truly alarming. The two joined forces on the opening day to deliver an attack on feminism. Katarina Runske, a gloomy Swedish woman, painted a dark picture of the collapse of moral values in her home country. Children, she claimed, were beset by anxiety attacks and stress, and "even the Volvo car is no longer made in Sweden". Runske doomed on about "socialistic indoctrination" and about Swedish toddlers, wrested from their mothers' arms and forced into day-care centres, where tax laws, subsidised equipment and cheap nutritious food outclassed anything "ordinary families" could offer. She misquoted Lenin—"Give me the child until he is two and he's mine for life," (Lenin actually asked for eight years) without realising that the Bolshevik had appropriated it from Proverbs; and brought an excited gasp from the flagging audience when she flashed up a euphemistic cartoon of a man and woman "making babies" in a sex-education book for toddlers. "I think we have had enough of that," she chided the slide projectionist, who promptly removed the offending image. Let Sweden be a warning, she declared. "Many other countries are at the beginning of the creeping stage."

Valerie Riches maintained that Britain wasn't so much creeping, as rushing, to embrace totalitarianism. She bewailed how feminism had helped tear the family apart and mourned the emasculation of men who had become "the scapegoats of the psychological and emotional problems of some women". At the heart of the problem, and central to our spiritual and moral malaise, was the denial of natural differences between men and women.

Radical difference between the sexes, different functions, and a strong bond between men and women, coerced, if necessary, by tradition and the law, was a recurrent, though not always explicit theme. Even Dr Hossein Seyyed Nasr, a Muslim philosopher and hardly the most likely person to address a predominantly Catholic conference, was able to endorse this message, citing approvingly the way in which traditional societies took cognisance of sexual difference as "evidence of the divine order". Seyyed Nasr is the author of the "Muslim Concept of Motherhood"—widely available at the conference—and he obviously made unexpected sense to the delegates. "It takes a Muslim to tell us," I heard one delegate whisper.

Seyyed Nasr attempted to explain the spiritual crisis of man by reinterpreting the history of science and religion. Apparently, drugged by "scientism", "rationalism" and "materialism", we have sinned against nature and God, treating nature as a "prostitute rather than a wife". Galileo's inquisitor, we were told, had been right to denounce Galileo for committing the ultimate folly of separating science from the sacred. Seyyed Nasr's talk was an urbane and intelligent version of something we are all now familiar with—a left ecologism more commonly heard from someone like Prince Charles (indeed, I wondered if he was the clue to Di's attendance?). Here it only served to encourage the right-wing irrationalism expressed at the conference, where the supposedly mystical, inevitable and sacred "complementarity" of the sexes was frequently used to justify prejudice.

This notion of sexual difference and complementarity, while not totally central to the subject of the conference, nevertheless felt indispensable. The two main organisers, Vollmer and Wilson, exuded a kind of femininity more familiar to viewers of *Dallas* than to readers of the *Catholic Herald*. And the congress's English hosts, the Order of Christian Unity, who rented office space on its behalf, supplied their own exponent of this ideology. The fading girlish charms of Joanna Bogle, a leading figure in the Order, who is married to the conference's general secretary and is also organiser of the Campaign for the Feminine Woman, were much in evidence around the conference.

On one level, the conference was more laughable than a serious threat to progressive help for "families". The arguments lacked both substance and logic, such as "Professor" Julian Simons's startling assertion that the only world shortage was of people. This was proved, he claimed, by the fact that, "If you have you hair cut, the hairdresser will be paid more than a few years ago," and that the same was true for "Indian cooks and American economists". And the audience was reassuringly lacking in politicians and influential folk. Like many pro-family movements, the overt target of this conference was "youth", an illusion well-sustained here by the white-shirted volunteer stewards from British Catholic schools. But the main bulk of the audience was composed of the usual older women, seeking reassurance about the lifestyles they had chosen. Angela Rumbold, the only member of the government to speak, in fact distanced herself from the conference at the eleventh hour. She won a cool reception for her timely reminder that policy had to take account of the inevitability of change in women's lives.

Nor did the conference's inefficiency suggest immediate cause for alarm. Stonewall, the political pressure and education group for gay rights, had booked a stall in the foyer, but the organisation's purpose was only grasped when members set out their display. The conference organiser immediately arrived to oversee the dismantling of the stall by some rather threatening men who then evicted the group. Half an hour later, apparently after consultation with their swish PR company, the conference organiser was back, exuding tolerance and offering Stonewall the chance of rebuilding their stall. Meanwhile, an entirely separate gay rights' group, Brighton against Clause 28, had managed to get in as delegates and walked straight on to the platform after the Princess of Wales' speech.

She brought an excited gasp from the audience when she flashed up a cartoon of a man and woman "making babies" from a sex education book. "I think we've had enough of that," she said firmly

But aspects of the congress did leave a sense of unease. It was unnerving to see the young volunteer stewards, who initially said they were only there "to see Princess Diana" or because "it would look good on the UCCA forms", begin to relish the machismo of manhandling protestors. The organisers then started to refer to them as "the Angels", uncomfortably evoking proto-Fascist rallies. Yet, even more worrying was the injection of hysteria into the "family" debate at a time when crucial new policies are being formulated. Talk of "national suicide" (the declining birthrate), "child-murder" (abortion, even after rape) and of communities "shaming anti-social, immoral behaviour by gossip and abuse", may not be at the heart of Tory thinking. But it certainly fuels a general belief in a moral and spiritual crisis caused by evil deviants. And where such beliefs abound, it is easier to take refuge in simple moralism than to take stock of social changes and produce policies which would advantage those most vulnerable to the changes. ●

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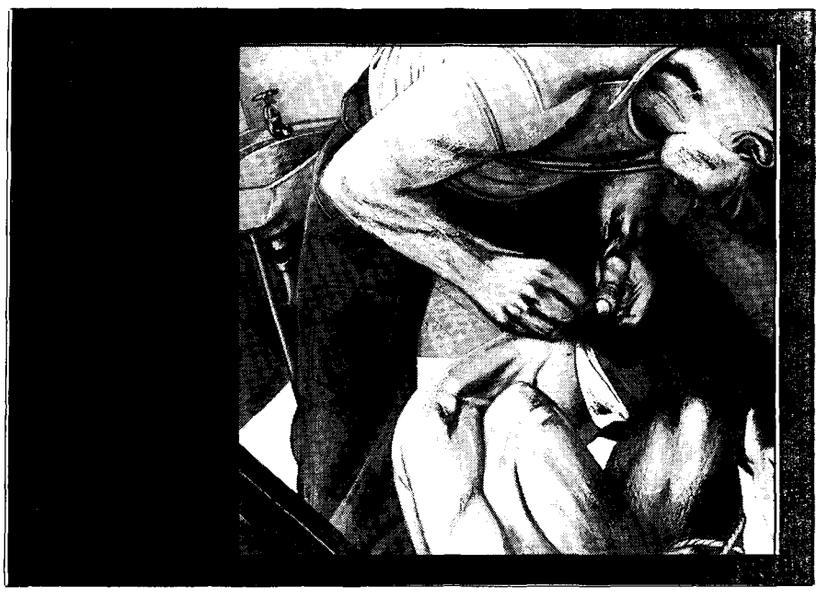
Wrongs of a bill of rights

Does Britain need a bill of rights? We invited two sceptics to tell us why they're against the idea

For many years the call for a bill of rights has been a central plank of centre party policy. But the left has always been lukewarm or hostile, fearing that it could tie the hands of a Labour government or place too much power in the hands of reactionary judges.

But more recently, the issue has been taken up by a broader spectrum of political opinion — partly as a result of the decline of civil liberties under the Thatcher administration. Charter 88, which the *NSS* launched 20 months ago, included a demand for a bill of rights as part of its programme. Now even the Labour Party is starting to change. A few weeks ago, newspaper leaks suggested that it will soon come out in favour of incorporating the European Convention. The news prompted a rear guard action by those sections of the party opposed to incorporation. As a result, a formal announcement has been delayed, although it is likely to come before the party conference in the autumn.

We're in favour of a bill. But we recognise that there are principled objections. So last week we invited two sceptics —Alistair Darling, Labour's home affairs spokesperson, and Conor Gearty, fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and co-author of a new book, *Freedom Under Thatcher* (OUP), to discuss their objections with Stuart Weir (editor) and Jolyon Jenkins (assistant editor). This is what was said.



Robert Harris/Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Jolyon Jenkins: I think all share the belief that there has been an erosion of civil liberties in the last ten years, in part because of a shift in power towards the executive. The process didn't start ten years ago, but it has accelerated. The question is whether we can restore our rights by writing them down?

Conor Gearty: I came to England from Ireland in the early 1980s and was initially persuaded by the arguments for a bill of rights. In my background, judges were fairly regularly cast, in civil libertarian terms, as the good guys. But over the 1980s I became persuaded by the alternative arguments. A bill of rights can only strike a balance between rights and state interests. This is seen in its most extreme form in the European Convention on Human Rights, where the exceptions invariably swallow up the rule. So that when we talk about incorporation of the Convention, what we really mean is the creation of a document which requires regular adjudication to flesh out its true meaning. What that involves is the transfer of a great deal of power from the executive to the courts. There's a very serious question about the extent to which the courts are equipped to determine the balance in a way which preserves freedoms. Looking into the judicial record I became convinced that the English judiciary were not equipped for that task.

Alistair Darling: I agree: I'm not against a bill of rights, but I think it's more important to deliver legislation in specific terms. For example, if you see that one of the difficulties in this country is that the executive keeps information to itself, then it seems to me that you tackle that more effectively with a freedom of information act, which would leave very little open to interpretation by the judiciary. The alternative might be to have a clause in a bill of rights to say the information ought generally to be free. But unless you are quite specific, you will find that the judiciary tends to err on the side of privacy and confidentiality whenever it can. If rights are to be available, that's a political rather than a judicial decision, and I would prefer to narrow the discretion judges have down to an absolute minimum.

Jenkins: Yes—specific pieces of legislation will identify the areas that you see as particularly problematic. But one of the points about a bill of rights, surely, is that it can take into account the unexpected. For example, in the miners' strike, the police started to do things that it wasn't apparent they had the power to do, like setting up road-blocks and restricting freedom of movement. A bill of rights lays down principles that can be applied to whatever situation arises.

Darling: The important thing is to keep the scope for

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judges' deliberation as narrow as possible. I don't want judges to be in any doubt, for example, that there is a right to freedom of information. All I want them to decide is whether, in a particular set of circumstances, an individual is entitled to information.

Stuart Weir: What are your specific pieces of legislation?

Darling: Apart from freedom of information, there's legislation dealing with equality, discrimination, privacy and the press—substantially Calcutt—the security services... We're thinking in terms of about four or five pieces of legislation. In the absence of anything else it's quite useful to have general rights set out. The European Convention has provided some benefits—the question of corporal punishment or the rights of homosexuals in Northern Ireland for example. But on the other side, in the case of the trade union ban at GCHQ, the exceptions overrode the generality, and the thing was useless. You've got to remember that the European Convention was drawn up after the last war—a major trauma. In the same way, many countries got their bills of rights at the time of independence, and it was thought important to set out some ground rules. But if you simply left it at ground rules, you would end up with a generality which wouldn't help in particular cases.

Weir: In Northern Ireland it's not just homosexuals—there have been a whole class of cases, to do with police detention and interrogation. Immigration cases have gone to Europe...

Darling: Let me give you an example with immigration. One of the articles of the Convention protects family life. But every single European country has immigration rules that fly in the face of that aim.

Weir: Why not draft something which is suitable for use in this country and which could address questions like the primary purpose rule or freedom of information?

Darling: It would be theoretically possible, in a single bill, to address every problem you can identify. There would be other bids put in: I'm quite sure that the Conservatives would want to put in a section entrenching property rights, or guaranteeing funding for private schools and hospitals. You'd end up in a quagmire of horsetrading, and get a large unwieldy piece of legislation which it would be difficult to deliver. I'm a practical person. I want to deliver things quickly and easily, in a way I think will make a difference.

Gearty: What worries me, Alistair, is that you seem to be proposing a two-track policy: first, provision of a comprehensive body of legislation across a wide range of areas, guaranteeing substantive rights, and additionally, an overall general bill of rights based on the European Convention.

Darling: No, at the present time we're still formally considering the question of the European Convention, and no decision has yet been taken...

Gearty: ...ah, I was trying to trap you and it didn't work! But this array of primary legislation you propose will be very difficult to get through parliament. My fear is that if there is a two-track approach, Labour might settle for the short cut of incorporation. Now, if we incorporate the Convention, the risk is that many people who have been educated to feel anxious about the constitution will feel: "that's it—we've got human rights." And the energies for reform will be dissipated. Labour itself, which will soon find itself caught up in the difficulties of executive government, will find that this fine legislation currently proposed does not mature.

Darling: That is why, until recently, the majority feeling in the party was that we shouldn't go for incorporation. But we are signatories to the Convention, and it seems to me that the logic is either to incorporate it, or indicate that we're no longer bound by it. You can't have it both ways. I think it would be disastrous if incorporation were to happen before anything else, and people then said: now let's do education, the economy and so on. I've thought at some points, in more depressing conversations with people in Charter 88, that if we'd said we'd have a bill of rights, no one would take a blind bit of notice what was in it. Because we've taken the more difficult route, we've put up with some flak which I think is unjustified.

Jenkins: Instead of a bill of rights being seen as a sop to the chattering classes, couldn't it be seen as a signal that a Labour government intended to take civil liberties seriously?

Darling: That's almost a totem pole approach to politics: if you do something that appears to be dramatic, you don't need to worry about the detail.

Gearty: And these political signals can be *litigated*.

Jenkins: Well, a more concrete advantage would be that, from day one, the Convention would be part of UK law, and there would then exist a fast-track method of securing one's rights. People would no longer have to wait until they had exhausted all the domestic remedies before they went to Europe. At the moment, the government persists with legislation which it knows is going to be overturned in the European court, because it knows this won't happen for many months or years. It plays a cynical game. I'm thinking of, for example, court-reporting bans, or the sexually discriminatory immigration rules, where the government lost in Europe. If these things could have been litigated in the British courts, perhaps they would never have happened.

Gearty: But would it work? Judges in the Privy Council have for many years been interpreting the bills of rights of other jurisdictions, and have done so very restrictively. And, less well known, the courts have quite recently got into the habit of behaving as though the European Convention was *already* part of our law. They've produced restrictive rules by *applying* it. I'll give you three examples. Lord Templeman, in the *Spycatcher* case, said it was necessary to restrict freedom of information in a democratic society. Then the divisional court did the same over the Sinn Fein broadcasting ban. Third, in the Jeremy Warner case, where a journalist was required to disclose his sources, the Lords said this was in accordance with the Convention.

Darling: I think we need to broaden out discussion away from the narrow question of a bill of rights. The approach that is really essential is constitutional reform to break down the power that is concentrated in Whitehall. Otherwise you are always going to be bedevilled by the centralised "freemasonry" that is the curse of this country. ▶

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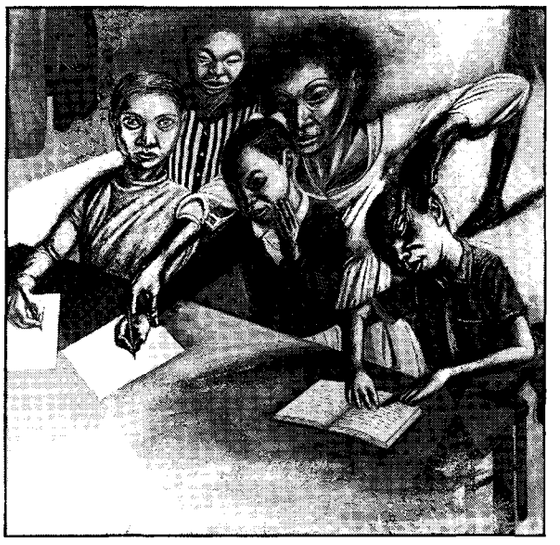
Jenkins: But this has always been part of the Charter 88 case—that a bill of rights only makes sense in the context of a state which has a written constitution, reform of the judiciary, freedom of information and so on...

Gearty: Any bill of rights requires a degree of social consensus for it to be meaningful. Can Britain in its current state, with its deeply divided political spectrum, produce such a document?

Weir: But the current system dramatises the differences. When you look behind it, you find a people in broad agreement over a range of issues. We are not as divided a society as we look.

Gearty: I quite agree. And so we are led to electoral reform, which many see as more important than a bill of rights. I put it to my class of 40 in Cambridge, who had studied civil liberties for a year. And the vast majority, given the option of choosing one piece of reform, came down in favour of electoral reform.

Darling: Electoral reform, which I concede has a great deal of merit, and which is worthy of being looked at, can be regarded in exactly the same way as bills of rights—that once you have it, everything in the garden will be rosy.



Weir: Conor, if you are opposed to either incorporation, or a bill of rights written anew, how would you give people a far better sense of what their rights are, and some means of redress and remedy?

Gearty: We should address our responsibilities as citizens. We should push for more devolution, greater decentralisation, a more powerful select committee system, reform of the House of Lords, the transformation of the people of this country from subjects to citizens.

Weir: And if the judiciary is the main obstacle to having a bill of rights, are you prepared to live with this judiciary, or do you have ideas about what should happen to it?

Gearty: Up to now I've been arguing in a way that seems to suggest that successfully reforming the judiciary could actually meet my objection to a bill of rights. There is a more subtle argument, which is that we are perhaps guilty of a kind of constitutional immaturity. Rather than confront our responsibilities as citizens, we've contrived the transfer of too much control to the judges. Reform of the judiciary must involve merging the legal profession, having a whole range of solicitors appointed to the bench, it might involve a select committee on the judiciary in a way that recognises the political dimension to their work. Why not have judges answering for the implications of their decisions? I'm not keen on moving to a continental system of a career judiciary. I'm not sure that the answer is to bureaucratise the judges, so that you have younger versions of Robert Armstrong becoming judges.

Jenkins: So reform just means greater accountability plus a broadening of the social base of the legal profession? But this is what everyone has wanted for 20 years or more, and it hasn't happened.

Gearty: Yes, but that's a leading question. Reform of the judiciary is especially important only if we've given it a bill of rights to play with. And it is *because* I am weak in these answers that I am reluctant about a bill of rights. It's the very weakness in analysis of reform of the judiciary that leads me to use that as another argument in saying we should direct our energies elsewhere.

Jenkins: I think there is a strand in Charter 88 which actually sees a bill of rights as a stalking horse for reform of the judiciary: once you had a bill, you would *have* to do something about the judges.

Darling: I think you can get bogged down with the problem of changing the judges. I think it will be at least 30-40 years before you begin to see any changes. After all, what judges do most of the time is adjudicate on technical, legal matters —which suggests they are likely to be recruited from lawyers. That is the start of the problem: both branches of the profession are not noted for their wide-ranging intake. I think the opening up of the legal profession and judiciary is wholly laudable and ought to be pursued whether or not you do anything about constitutional reform. But I come back to the original point: deciding whether people have rights is a matter for the legislature, not for the judiciary. You cannot hold the judiciary to account. I think there are grave risks in the judges justifying what they do, because you then start to get litigation through the front pages of newspapers.

Jenkins: It seems to me that the Labour Party has not seen reforming the judiciary as a particularly high priority.

Darling: It is one of many priorities. Clearly reforming the base from which the judiciary is recruited is urgent. But I think you have to be realistic about it: you cannot do it overnight. You could appoint people with the most impeccable credentials, and you might find that once they're sitting on the bench in their ermine robes, that they turn out to be some of the most reactionary judges ever.

Jenkins: Perhaps it would be more constructive if we were more open in acknowledging the essentially political nature of judging?

Gearty: Yes. Judges always call to their aid the inexorability of legal logic. People who are not reading the judgments, but only the news coverage, believe that judges are compelled to arrive at the judgments on account of some commitment to a code of laws—which is, of course, untrue. It would be nice if we could open up that area of debate, I agree.

Jenkins: And a more sophisticated understanding of the way judges go about their business would make them more accountable. At the moment they get screaming headlines from the tabloids and references to their upper-class origins from the left. Both sorts of criticism are quite easy for them to dismiss.

Darling: But you're only accountable if someone has the power of hire and fire over you. And I'm not even sure I would want that to happen to judges.

Jenkins: Well, it's an argument about the meaning of "accountability". Civil servants can, in a sense, be held to account before select committees, even if the committee doesn't have the power of hire and fire.

Darling: Actually, I think that the lack of accountability of judges ranks some way down the list of the problems we face.

Gearty: Within its own terms, the independence of the legal profession is not something we should automatically presume to be a myth. The independence it has should be nurtured. And if we were to turn the judiciary into a branch of the civil service we might end up with a bleaker state of affairs where the judge appeared to be part of the establishment that the individual is seeking redress against. ●

Next week, Helena Kennedy, barrister and member of Charter 88's council, will be putting the case in favour of a bill of rights

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Age of consent?

Amanda Green has a lump in her breast—and she's being forced to have an operation that she doesn't want

Three weeks ago, during a routine check-up at the doctor's, I mentioned to my GP that I had a lump in my breast. I wasn't worried about it—I've had such lumps before and they have a habit of disappearing after a couple of weeks. And I'd had a mammogram back in 1986 that hadn't revealed anything alarming.

My GP wasn't particularly concerned either. Nevertheless she referred me to a breast clinic. "It will put your mind at rest if you have a proper check-up."

I have now been to the breast clinic three times. On the first visit I did not have to wait too long. I saw a doctor who was very kind and talked to me seriously about what he thought the lump was. Again came the reassurance that he did not think it was anything serious.

He did say, however, that I should come back for a scan and then for an injection to remove a segment of the lump with a needle. I felt rather guilty because I seemed to be using up NHS resources unnecessarily. When I went back for the scan I saw a different doctor. She also said that she did not feel there was anything to be concerned about. Because there appeared to be a cluster of lumps, she said I should come back the following week to have the injection so that a section could be removed and analysed.

It was the following week, when I went back to have the injection, that I started to feel I had lost control. I got to the hospital at 9am, the appointed time. It wasn't until 11.30 that I was called through by a nurse. I was then told to wait on my own in a small room. One young doctor came to talk to me at this stage. He told me that the scan had not shown up anything serious.

The injection showed that the lump was not cancerous. I was sitting there feeling pleased when the same young doctor came back in and told me that I would need to have an operation to remove the lump. I was devastated. I have had one operation before under general anaesthetic—an appendicectomy that went wrong. I was in hospital over a month and had to have a second major operation.

I asked why it was necessary to have the lump removed. The doctor assured me that it was not because they were concerned about it, it was merely because only by removing the lump that they could make 100 per cent sure that it wasn't cancerous. He also said that it was the clinic's policy to remove all lumps. Again I said that I did not think it was necessary and I was told that I would have to talk to the doctor in charge. I shall refer to this doctor as doctor X.

I had already come across doctor X. He is about forty-five with a very loud and aristocratic voice and a rather unkempt appearance. While I was waiting to have the needle stuck in me, he stood in the corridor and shouted at a black nurse. She had not been stamping some forms properly. He grabbed the stamp from the desk and proceeded to stamp the forms vigorously in front of her, banging on the table and yelling that the whole thing was a "bloody waste of time".

I had to wait again before I could see doctor X. Finally, after shouting in the corridor for the "bloody diary" he blustered into the room. He examined me briefly, turning to yet another young doctor behind him and saying, "Now, you've felt this lump haven't you?" The doctor hadn't, but said, "Yes," and looked sheepish. I think doctor X had been told that I was worried about the operation, because without looking at me he said, "that will have to come out, young lady, it will only get bigger". Then he walked out.

After ten minutes I realised that I had been forgotten about. It was the black nurse who finally discovered me. I said I was waiting for doctor X to make an appointment for me. Eventually yet another young doctor came in and said I had to fill in some forms.

By now I was in a state of shock. The mention of the operation had been so out of the blue. I was asked whether I had arthritis, whether I'd had a heart attack, whether I'd had a stroke... And then I was asked if there was anything else I wanted to know. This was where I made my mistake. I should have asked more about the operation. But I felt too defeated and, as they had forgotten to tell me when it was, I just asked for the date. The young doctor also said, "Don't worry, you won't wake up to find you haven't got a breast. Just joking."

I was devastated. I asked why it was necessary to have the lump removed. He said it was the clinic's policy

So why am I having the operation? The last young doctor made it very clear that I was not having the operation because they were concerned about the lump, "You can get the results from your GP—in your case there is no hurry because we know it isn't serious."

I am due to go to hospital next Wednesday. I rang my GP who told me to insist that a senior doctor examines me on the morning of the operation. I have also made an appointment to see a specialist at a private clinic. I just need to talk to someone about it.

I no longer care about the lump. I just want to wrest control back from doctor X and the hospital authorities. A lawyer-friend has assured me that they cannot force me to have the operation. I feel that I am on a treadmill that I can't get off and I'm worried that the doctors will be angry that I've sought a second opinion.

It has crossed my mind that there may be something wrong and that the doctors are just trying to reassure me. But then they would surely be interested in the results of the operation? My health has now become a secondary issue—I am more anxious about how to deal with the doctors. ●

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A shaky platform

How many people would vote Communist in a Soviet general election? Robert Service looks at the state of the party

When some of a party's brightest and best decide to form another one, something serious has happened—especially when the old party has held power for over 70 years in one of the world's major states. Last week's split at the 28th Soviet Communist party congress had been likely for months as members of the Democratic Platform faction indicated that unless the congress decisions went their way they would leave.

Major issues divide the Democratic Platform from the party they are quitting. They want to end the Communist claim to a permanent "leading role" in the Soviet state and to deprive party bureaucrats of privileges. Communists, they believe, should become just one party in a free multi-party system and should enact pro-market reforms with immediate effect. One of their spokesmen, Vyacheslav Shostakovski, rector of the Moscow higher party school, has for two years been demanding faster radicalisation. Last summer he was host to a conference at the school, speaking warmly about the possible emergence of a multi-party system.

The members of the Platform are said to have the sympathy of a large minority of party members. Some 130,000 discontented Communists gave up their party membership between January and May 1990. Not all of them have yet left: some are staying in order to badger the Central Committee for a share of the old party's financial assets.

What will be the Platform's future? The solidarity of its adherents will be severely tested once they cease to be party members. The Soviet party's traditional image of ideological unanimity was always false. Since Gorbachev's accession to power, the real variety within it has emerged. In the Democratic Platform there are not only communist reformers but also social democrats, liberals and conservatives of a recognisably western type. Debilitating disputes between them seem inevitable.

The damage done to Gorbachev by the loss of the Platform should not be exaggerated. A master of institutional politics, he has always been able to play the various sides of the party against each other; and one side has now picked up its ball to leave the pitch. But Gorbachev can survive the mini-crisis. He was victorious at the congress when it had looked as if, after the Russian federation's party congress, he had everything to lose. Yegor Ligachev, his arch-rival, was rejected as deputy General Secretary. And the organisational decisions make the new Politburo an unwieldy body that it is unlikely to reverse the trend whereby the Presidential Council formulates policy. This week's decree on broadcasting came from the Council, not the Politburo.

Levada's poll revealed that only 19 per cent would vote Communist if a freely contested election were held

Though Gorbachev was disgruntled with the Democratic Platform's moves, his closing speech nodded favourably in their direction when he called for a grand coalition of the country's democratic forces. Earlier in the congress he used the buzz-words "parliament" and "market", anathema to the conservatives.

Yet institutional politics have an increasingly surreal quality. Gorbachev's huge task remains to effect a fast change towards a market economy without reducing the standard of living. Surveys reveal the growing doubts of the population about the Communist party's ability to cope. Professor Yuri Levada's poll of 2,500 people revealed that only 19 per cent would vote Communist if a freely contested election were held. Earlier this year Gorbachev called for the removal of the editor of *Argumenty i fakty* for publishing the results of a questionnaire on Gorbachev's unpopularity. Levada cautiously states that 46 per cent of his sample have "no trust at all" in the country's present leadership.

Even this does not ease the Democratic Platform's problems. In the poll, only 11 per cent said they would vote for it. The Platform is impeded by its present lack of access to the mass media, but tensions among its members will surely also be a problem.

Shostakovski and his friends were itching for a final confrontation. But they still have the problem of being known as ex-Communists even though, unlike the Hungarian and Polish Communists who lost national elections last year, they have left to try to remove the obloquy of past membership. Indeed, it seems that the Russian people's imagination is not gripped by any political party, actual or about to be formed. But this is not the same as political apathy. Russians are becoming politicised, and their political opinions are running to extremes.

The scale of the crisis in the USSR means that the process will continue. Sugar and tea are hard to obtain in Moscow. Miners across the country have been striking for higher wages and better living conditions. This week the Ukrainian republic demanded increased sovereignty.

No one, not even Boris Yeltsin (who, according to Levada, won 84 per cent support for his election to the Russian federation's presidency) has put forward a set of policies which can be predicted to bring about economic recovery without unemployment and widespread poverty. Cunningly, Yeltsin has held aloof from the Democratic Platform despite holding similar views. He wants to be a supra-party politician. The implication is obvious: the Democratic Platform's exodus is important more for drawing a line under the pages of the past than for opening a volume for the future. The 28th Communist party congress, with its pro-reform proposals and its unsatisfied splitters, solved nothing.

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Hard news

The press barons want to crush the journalists' union. Vicky Hutchings fears that they may well succeed

Britain's newspaper proprietors are seeking to crush the National Union of Journalists through wholesale de-recognition of the union. All the major newspapers, with the Murdoch press in the vanguard, have now tried to de-recognise or weaken the NUJ by bringing in personal contracts and performance-related pay deals for journalists.

It's popularly supposed that the newspaper industry's sudden assault on the union's position was a panicky response to the EC's new social charter. The charter states that employers and trade unions have the "right to negotiate and conclude collective agreements under the conditions laid down by national legislation and practice". The word is that the reference to "practice" provoked proprietors to remove any such "practice" that might be going on under their roofs.

A likely story. Britain didn't sign the charter and, in any case, the charter did not propose legislating on collective rights. That's left to national governments. And why should it be only the journalists' union which came under attack? It looks far more like a pre-emptive strike, undertaken at a moment when the NUJ is financially weak and pretty unpopular with its members, to rob journalists of the power which the print unions once exercised in Fleet Street.

Most journalists now directly typeset their own copy. This process, known as direct input, potentially gives journalists the kind of power over production that the printing unions once used to make their members into a high-paid working class élite which dictated terms to the newspaper barons. Indeed, Steve Turner, who is father of the NUJ chapel on the *Daily Mirror* and a candidate in this month's elections for NUJ general secretary, believes that the employers fear a merger with the other media unions which would allow the printing unions seen off in the Wapping dispute back into the driving seat through the NUJ.

Ironically, the proprietors' new militancy is forcing the current general secretary, Harry Conroy, down this road. The NUJ gives strike pay to those chapels or members who try to resist de-recognition. The syndrome of more disputes, fewer members and less money looks like making what was a long-term strategy a more immediate objective.

Murdoch's News International has already introduced personal contracts and removed recognition of the NUJ chapel at the *Sun* and *News of the World*. Writers on Murdoch's other papers, the *Times*, *Sunday Times* and the four supplements, the *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, *Times Educational Supplement*, *Times Literary Supplement* and the Scottish *TES*, have all been sent personal contracts. They have been given until 17 August to sign and offered sweeteners if they do so before then.

"Nobody is forcing us to sign the contracts, it's not as blatant as that," says a *Times* journalist. "But there are nods and winks. If you are a refusenik, it's made plain that you can forget about promotion—and of course you don't know how many of your colleagues are standing firm, and how many have signed. It feels very lonely if you are holding out."

On the *Daily Mail*, with an NUJ membership of 203, the union has been completely de-recognised and the 20 journalists who haven't signed their personal contracts were frozen out of the 4 per cent wage rise in April. Last week, two journalists on the *Lancaster Guardian* went to an industrial tribunal in a test case brought by the NUJ. They have refused to sign personal contracts and have been awarded a lower rise than colleagues who have signed. They are claiming discrimination under the Employment Protection Act, on the grounds of trade union membership and activity. A decision is imminent.

The situation on the *Mirror* is slightly more complicated because everyone has now signed personal contracts, which entail performance-related pay rises, but is still bargaining collectively through the NUJ on pay. The contracts have produced worse terms of employment. According to Steve Turner, the most resented change has been the imposition of a week's less holiday than under the house agreement.

"There are plenty of nods and winks that if you are a refusenik, you can forget about promotion."—Times journalist

Besides supporting several strikes on provincial papers, the NUJ is reporting Britain to the International Labour Organisation over the government's failure to "promote and encourage" collective agreements, a duty laid down in the ILO convention. Managers say journalists are free to join the NUJ if they want, but the union points out that refusing to negotiate with them takes away much of the point of joining since it removes their primary activity—protecting members' pay and conditions.

The deepening fight, and the election for general secretary, have exposed the underbelly of NUJ. Journalists complain about high subscription rates, financial mismanagement, the NUJ's growing debt, the low quality of the officers and the lack of an in-house solicitor. There is an overall feeling that the NUJ lacks a clear sense of direction.

The NUJ officials' only hope for now seems to be a Labour victory in 1991-92 and new laws to reverse the government's anti-union and deregulatory policies. But the NUJ is likely to be dismembered by then. Far better to develop the strategy of defending freedom of expression, in the courts if need be, as they have done in the Sinn Fein, Goodwin and *Real Lives* cases. Even so, it may be that this high-profile role will be the NUJ's most precious gift to a merger of media unions in the not so far distant future. It is probably too small a union with too selfish a membership to go it alone.●

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Banquets and beggars

Kenya's one-party state kept poverty and corruption behind the scenes of a "tourist paradise". Louise Rodgers reports from Nairobi on the reasons to rebel

Paramilitary police, armed with automatic rifles, man a road-block between Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta Airport and the city centre. Two men peer out of the darkness through the windows of the taxi and a third crouches to warm his hands at a fire they have lit by the side of the road. It is not clear who, or what, they are looking for, but when they are satisfied that we are not it, the car is waved on.

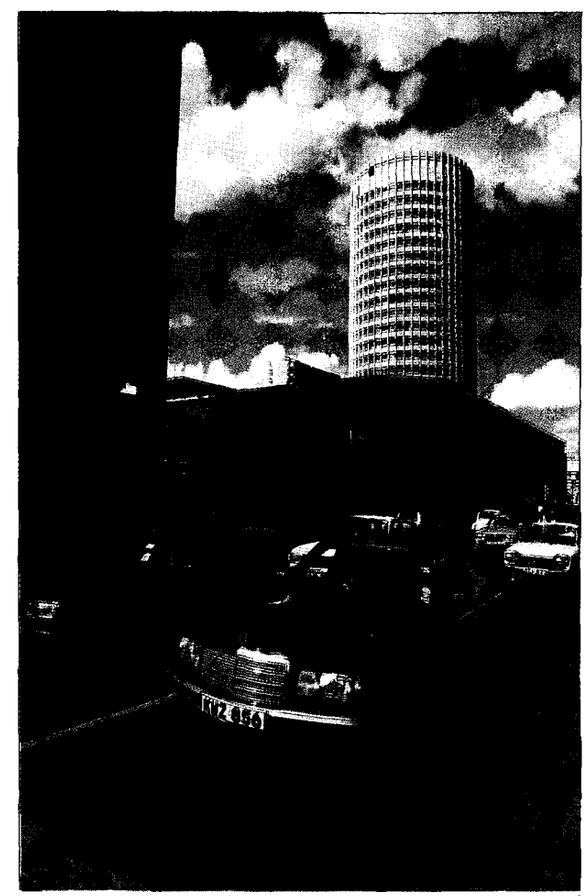
Although this is a less than reassuring welcome to a country that has over the last week seen its worst civil disturbances since the aborted coup of 1982, it provides one of the few visible indications that the violence was not purely in the imaginations of western journalists. Official figures put at 20 the number of dead that resulted when armed police moved in to break up an illegal political rally on 7 July. Local people estimate that the true figure is much higher. They report that sporadic gunfire could still be heard near Nairobi city centre on the following Monday night and access to and from the slum areas, where most of the trouble took place, remained difficult for much of the week. Deaths were also reported in other urban areas of Kenya.

An uneasy calm prevails in Nairobi a week later. Public transport has returned to normal, enabling shops and businesses to reopen. In the bars and restaurants of the city centre, all with the ubiquitous portrait of President Moi, Kenyans are anxious to reassure tourists on whom the economy depends that peace and stability have been restored.

The city at night is still very quiet. Few tourists leave the safe confines of their hotels, and the private security guards employed by many businesses have been supplemented by the occasional armed policeman. Taxi fares are considerably cheaper than usual now that competition for custom has increased. Fears that violent clashes would break out again at the weekend proved unfounded, although police maintained tight security in the "at risk" areas, mounting road-blocks and demanding identification from passing motorists.

Local newspapers have begun to talk about the unrest in the past tense and increasingly seek to blame "opportunist hooligans" for the rioting, deflecting any need for an analysis of the calls for a multi-party system that sparked it all off. The visit of ANC leader Nelson Mandela has not only provided a welcome diversion but also a symbol of Black African unity. Much has been made of his speech at a rally held in his honour on Friday, when he was applauded for criticising western governments for lecturing Africans on how to run their affairs. "What right have the whites anywhere to teach us about democracy when they executed those who asked for democracy during colonial rule?" he asked. Photographs of Mandela with President Moi were everywhere, emphasising the apparent cordial relationship between them.

Mandela's speech, which could be heard again the following day on the tape machines of Nairobi's "matatus", or local buses, included glowing tributes to the leaders of Kenya's struggle for independence from British rule. The where-



Chris Pillitz/Network

Symbols of wealth in downtown Nairobi: cars were attacked in the disturbances

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abouts of the country's modern dissidents is unclear. There have been a wave of detentions and Moi appears to have been largely successful in his efforts to get his most vocal critics off the streets. Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia, the two politicians who have led the campaign for a multi-party system, were arrested before the rally they had called to state their case, and which ended so violently. Their arrests were swiftly followed by the detention of a number of lawyers critical of Kenya's record on human rights.

With the temporary absence of the one-party state's most vigorous opponents, it is difficult to predict what will happen next. What does seem clear is that, despite the protestations of President Moi and the ruling KANU (Kenyan African National Union) party, Kenya is no longer, if it ever has been, the model of African stability.

Kenya has been described as "the land of a hundred millionaires and a hundred beggars", and this disparity between rich and poor is nowhere more evident than here in the capital. Much of the recent violence was directed against private cars which, as in so many developing countries, symbolise status and wealth. You can eat dinner in several different languages in Nairobi, and guidebooks urge travellers to stock up on basic and luxury goods which are not readily available in neighbouring Uganda or Tanzania. But this sophistication is only skin-deep.

Nairobi's skyline is dominated by another symbol of affluence, the skyscrapers of office and hotel buildings that seem strangely out of place in an African city. But if the much-vaunted winds of change were to blow much harder in Kenya, the skyscrapers would collapse like a stack of cards and reveal the squalor of the slum towns behind them.

The number of beggars on the streets in Nairobi is no greater than in London. But few visitors venture beyond the city centre to the slum areas where most people live in hopelessly overcrowded conditions and without adequate sanitation. Prostitution, petty crime and unemployment are endemic here. The "matatus" ply a busy trade between the slums and downtown Nairobi, spilling out office workers, shop assistants and restaurant staff daily in scenes not dissimilar to those in apartheid South Africa.

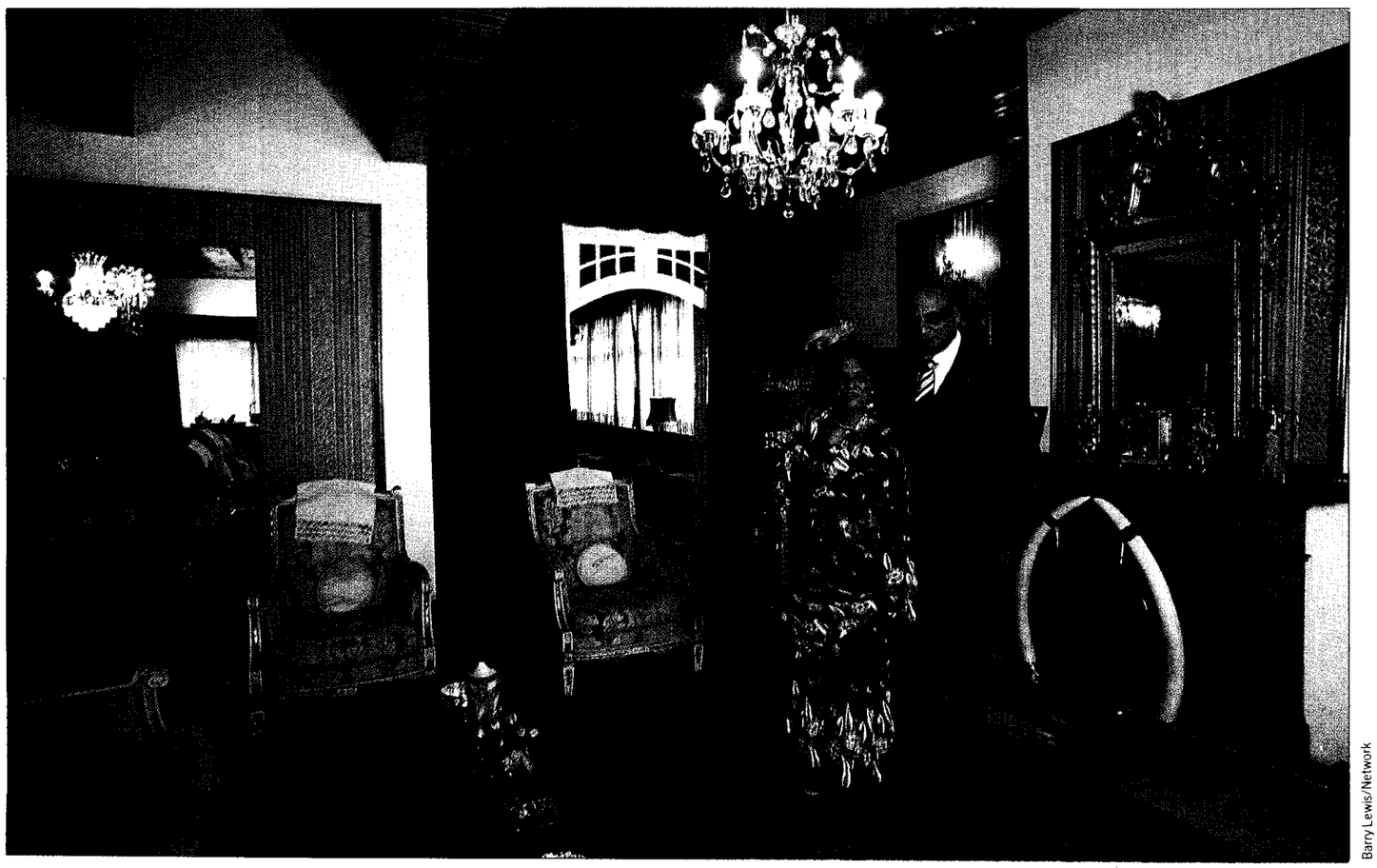
Many slum dwellers do not have jobs, and the number of unemployed increases as inexorably as the population. There is growing concern that 50 per cent of Kenya's total population is under 15 years of age. The concept of family planning, introduced in the mid-1960s, has made little or no impact on the vast majority of Kenyans.

Political and social unrest preceded the demands of the affluent middle classes for an end to the one-party state. Since the attempted coup by the Kenyan Air Force in 1982, other alleged conspiracies have come to light, but rarely are the details made known. The focus of discontent until now has been the shadowy Mwakenya movement, centred around lecturers at Nairobi University, about which little is known other than its socialist tendencies.

The reason for the existence of such clandestine groups is not difficult to understand. The demolition of the shanty town of Muoroto on the outskirts of Nairobi in May and the subsequent eviction of the squatters may have acted as a catalyst for much of last week's violence. A few months earlier, President Moi, during an official visit to the United States, tried unsuccessfully to secure funding to build a $100 million tower block, crowned with a statue of himself, in Nairobi's Uhuru Park. The irony of this has not been lost.

Accusations of tribalism are the latest form of insult in Kenya. President Moi, seeking to apportion blame for the unrest, has himself invoked its spectre and interpreted demands for pluralism as a power bid by the Kikuyu tribe, to which 6 million of Kenya's 16 million people belong. This also suits western perceptions that, in Africa, tribal interests, seldom defined, transcend all others.

Tribal aspirations cannot be discounted, and it is true that the outspoken critics of the current regime are almost all, but not exclusively, Kikuyu. But to focus on this as the single cause of Kenya's current problems is to ignore the situation of the poor, who have suffered most from the present regime's corruption and mismanagement. ●



The way the cookie crumbles: Nairobi biscuit maker Mr Maugi and his wife

Barry Lewis/Network

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NEW STATESMAN SOCIETY

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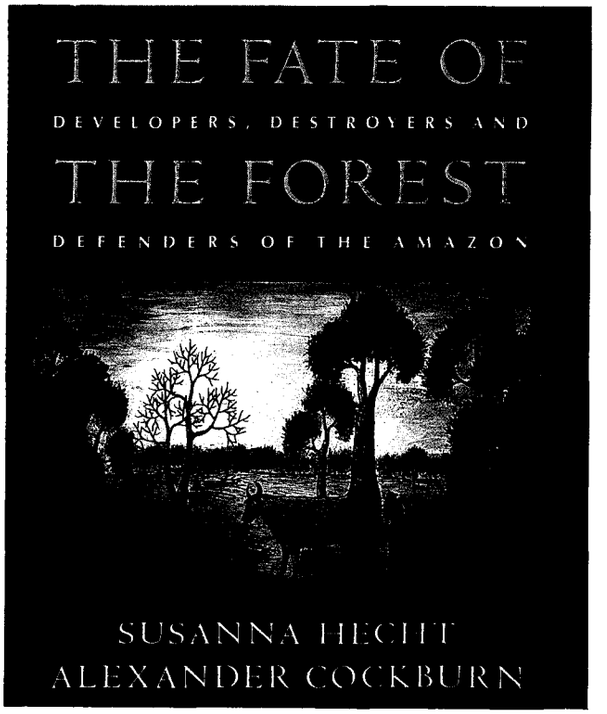

The Fate of the Forest is the result of more than ten years' research by ecologist Susannah Hecht and radical journalist Alexander Cockburn, a regular contributor to *NSS*. They have written a detailed examination of the continuing destruction of the rainforests of the Brazilian Amazon—one third of the world's total.

Oliver Rackman wrote in his review for our books pages on 8 December 1989: "Their argument—and it is persuasive—puts the blame on a quite small number of people, non-Amazonian Brazilians and a few foreigners... Their motives were old-fashioned: greed, ignorant optimism, forgetting past failures and thus repeating them."

The scope of the book is vast. Hecht and Cockburn cover the politics, history, anthropology, economics and biology of the region from the origins of the plant and animal life, through the gold fever of the conquistadores, to present day exploiters.

They take hope from the campaign by the people of the rainforest, and believe that the murder of Chico Mendes, the first rubber tapper to become an international figure, may have turned the tide.

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Food for thought

As the Gatt talks open, Denis MacShane tells the tale of Johnny Appleseed and Tommy Tealeaf

Johnny Appleseed is everyone's favourite American. His real name was John Chapman, a pioneering nurseryman, who travelled through the United States in the early 19th century, selling and giving away his apple seeds to create the orchards which have provided generations of Americans with apple pie.

In 1990, Chapman would be chief executive officer of Johnny Bioseed Inc, an aggressive plant genetic multinational based in Los Angeles, employing dozens of Vietnamese, Korean and Chinese PhDs, busy developing even more resistant and stronger apple seeds.

Now, Johnny Bioseed Inc's CEO has left the white-coated researchers to their own devices and travelled to Geneva for the opening of talks that will determine his company's future. For next week (23 July) opens the closing rounds of talks at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt), the world body that regulates trade, and on the outcome of these talks hangs the profitability of Johnny Bioseed Inc.

Gatt was set up in 1948 to try to reduce barriers to trade between countries. It has done so reasonably successfully in the past four decades, as anyone who looks at Japanese cars, Taiwanese PCs or Korean-made running shoes on sale in Britain can testify. Gatt's main field of operations has been in manufactured goods. But now, under prodding from the US, it is being invited to make a massive leap into two of the most sensitive areas of exchange—ideas and food.

The US is rich in both, and wants to see the world's trading system open its doors to American agricultural products, or to food produced in third world countries but controlled and traded by American companies.

It also wants to secure payments for trade in ideas, which, in Gattspeak, are called intellectual property rights.

Hence the interest of Mr Chapman. If Bangladesh and Bolivia accept the American position, Johnny Bioseed Inc would not only sell its resistant strains of fruit and seed worldwide. It could begin to claim royalties on each apple sold. Moreover, its experts can examine third world apples, and, if they find that there is a trace of the gene that Johnny Bioseed's geneticists spliced into *their* apple, they could then take action under Gatt to hit the government that permitted such "theft" of an intellectual property right.

Third world countries retort that this would extend the dominance of the rich north and its multinational corporations over the poorer south. Ideas and technology would stay under the control of the industrialised countries, while the poor would transfer yet more of their resources through royalty payments on patents and licences.

The third world also wants the US and the EC to lift all controls on the import of textiles, often seen as the first stage in economic development. Yet few of these countries are willing to stop the ruthless exploitation of children in the textile sweatshops of much of Asia, and they break unions and imprison labour organisers who try and get fairer wages.

There has been a call for Gatt to include a so-called "social clause", which would make access to the world's trading system dependent on observance of international labour standards. But third world governments, vociferous in condemning US proposals on intellectual property rights, throw up their hands in horror at the idea of extending labour freedoms to their own workers.

The complexities facing the search for an effective world trading order become even worse in agriculture. Socrates pointed out that anyone aspiring to political leadership had better know the current price of wheat. The observation is no less true today. Here the US makes some common cause with the third world in opposing the protection that keeps Japanese rice prices absurdly high, or the whole of west Europe's agricultural system protected by subsidies.

The Europeans have accomplished something never before achieved. In a mere 30 years they have massively reduced their agricultural populations, without the social cruelty depicted in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, or the eradication of communities by enclosures or corn law acts.

Unfortunately, policies with noble ends and good beginnings have ended up in a sea of fraud and fiddles. Thus European Community funds sponsor exports of agricultural products to third world countries, to the detriment of local output. So the US is right to push, and push hard for a lessening of agricultural protectionism, though it could make a start by cutting the $50 billion it spends on subsidising US farmers. But the use of land and the production of food has deeper meanings than appear on a balance sheet.

Socrates pointed out that anyone aspiring to political leadership had better know the current price of wheat

That really is the problem. Trade is not simply trade, but about power, profit and control over resources. Mr Chapman waits in his Geneva hotel, hoping that US negotiators can push through new Gatt rules that will bring billions of pennies into the coffers of Johnny Bioseed Inc.

He might ponder the history of another little-known character in British folklore, who also looked to his government to secure terms of international trade that would boost his profits. His name is Tommy Tealeaf and in the 1770s he lobbied hard to make sure that third world inhabitants in a British colony across the seas would pay a special tea tax.

Tommy Tealeaf's attempt to skew the world trading system to his exclusive profit produced a political backlash of immense proportions. As US trade experts open their dossiers in Geneva, they should remember that trade means more than dollars and cents. ●

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LETTERS

Safe sex surrender

The endorsement of the safe sex crusade in recent issues of *New Statesman & Society* (29 June & 6 July) is a sorry illustration of the left's surrender to irrationality on the Aids issue.

The central theme was summed up in Claire Sanders's assertion that "the true story is that in the 1990s Aids will be a heterosexual disease" and that therefore safe sex is society's only hope. But is this true? It is not true if you take the "preferred estimates" of the Day report published in January 1990.

According to its projections for 1993, the furthest it considered such projections could reliably be made, we could expect 960 new cases of Aids among gay men and 650 among heterosexuals. On past experience of official projections (the 1988 Cox report) it would probably be better to take the "lower projection", which for 1993 suggests 700 new cases among gay men and 50 among heterosexuals.

The only way in which it is possible to interpret the figures as suggesting more heterosexual than homosexual cases is by taking the "upper projections", which suggest 1500 heterosexual and 1200 homosexual cases in 1993. Yet such "worst case" scenarios have been consistently proved wrong.

Why not start from the real situation we face in Britain today? The true story is that up to April 1990 there had been 2597 cases of Aids among gay and bisexual men, 80 per cent of all cases. One result of the Aids panic has been a wave of intensified discrimination and harassment directed against lesbians and gay men, culminating in a series of grisly murders in the London area over the past couple of years. The intensified oppression of homosexuals is likely to encourage the sort of sexual encounters that will lead to the further spread of this infection. It is inappropriate to devote so much acreage to the heterosexual issues when the central issue raised by the Aids epidemic is the need for equal rights for homosexuals.

What is the true extent of heterosexual Aids in Britain today? Official figures record 189 cases up to the end of April. However, of these, 139 probably contracted HIV infection abroad and 28 from partners in recognised high risk categories. This leaves 19 cases of heterosexual transmission outside high risk categories, confirming that, although the numbers are increasing, heterosexual Aids remains a rare disease. It is widely recognised that it was the immediacy of the impact of Aids on the gay scene that led to major changes in behaviour and a slowing of the spread of HIV infection from the mid-eighties. All the experts agree that as long as disease and death from Aids remain rare among heterosexuals, changes in sexual behaviour are unlikely to happen. Scaremongering and safe sex propaganda will not stop the slow spread of heterosexual Aids; fortunately progress is being made in both vaccines and treatments.

The Aids panic is part of a wider climate of reaction that encourages individualistic preoccupations in a society in which all alternative models and collective solutions appear to have been discredited. Much of the left has given up any attempt to change the world in favour of simply trying to cling on to the world we know in the hope that, at least, things will not get much worse. In this spirit of fatalism and despair, the *NSS* safe sex campaign converges with Charter 88 and the green movement.

But just as reality has already refuted the government's alarmist Aids propaganda of the late eighties, so too it will refute the *NSS's* distorted epidemiology. Others will have to counter the left's continuing evasion of the real challenge of the Aids panic.

Michael Fitzpatrick
Don Milligan
London E9

Claire Sanders and Stuart Weir reply: Last year, reported cases of Aids acquired through heterosexual intercourse doubled from 102 to 201. This reveals just how low the Day report "lower projection" of 50 new cases in 1993 is. It implies that heterosexuals have already started to practise safer sex on the same level as gay men did in the mid-eighties. As Fitzpatrick and Milligan acknowledge, there is no evidence for this.

The percentage of cases of Aids acquired through heterosexual intercourse is increasing. In Europe as a whole as many heterosexuals have Aids as gay men. The *NSS* has always argued for equal rights for homosexuals, but to focus the debate on Aids only around this single, central issue is absurd. One of the significant points of our article, for example, is that *women* are particularly at risk (because the virus is transmitted more easily from men to women).

Fitzpatrick and Milligan are strangely silent on the number of people who are HIV positive—they talk only of Aids cases. According to the World Health Organisation, 60 to 65 per cent of cases of HIV worldwide have been transmitted through heterosexual sex. Over 14,000 people in the UK are HIV positive, 7 per cent through heterosexual sex. Given that this percentage is increasing, it is right to warn heterosexuals about the dangers of transmission.

Empty visions

Stephen Howe's article "Sitting on defence" (6 July) covers some complicated Labour ground very effectively. It is however a pity that he goes on using terms like "unilateralist" and "multilateralist" in non-specific ways. As a defender of the Non-Proliferation Treaty I suppose I am a multilateralist. But as one committed to the unconditional abandonment of British "independent" nuclear weapons I turn into a unilateralist.

Is it possible to take Labour's new multilateralist policy in relation to British nuclear weapons seriously? After all, the 1989 policy document urged a nuclear-free world by the year 2000. Unhappily the reality is that no one wearing a Labour leadership hat is prepared to say when we are going to negotiate, with whom we are going to negotiate or in broad terms *how* we are going to negotiate.

So it all remains in the world of pious hope with all the signs in the wrong direction. If the year 2000 vision actually meant anything much, would there not have been more of a howl from Labour's front bench when this government voted (2 to 108) against turning the Partial Test Ban Treaty into a Comprehensive one?

Stephen Howe rightly suggests that the Labour leadership has to give way to "a current of public opinion neurotic about defence". But public opinion can also be neurotic about gays, Asians, women's rights, and capital punishment. Our task, as socialists, is to challenge with conviction and to win public opinion, not to bow to the right-wing media winds.

Never was there a better time to take on establishment ideas on defence head on. From the environment to overpopulation, people know perfectly well what the real threats are today and they can understand that nuclear weapons add not one shred to our security. As it is, Labour risks even handing over the initiative on the Peace Dividend to the Conservatives.

Can there be a dry eye in the house?

Bruce Kent
Chair
CND
London N1

Football's traditions

R W Johnson writes interestingly about football, but he seems to me to get essential points wrong. First, the FA used to appoint a gent to be England's football manager. I well remember one Walter Winterbottom, who was in the amateur coach tradition. But since him, the FA has gone for what I would describe as the "NCO type"—respectable, deferential men who know their place in the hierarchy, but who will be stern disciplinarians with the team from whom they will demand a high work-rate, guts and neat dress off the pitch.

Football was first a public school sport in Britain and was supposed to inculcate the values of team spirit, courage, etc, into the young men who would staff the Empire. It was then made into a popular sport with the purpose of inculcating the same values in potentially dangerous

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working-class youths. Those sorts of ideas still underpin our football ethos, and English football will suffer until skills and improvisatory spirit are given more emphasis.

I am afraid Graham Taylor, the new English manager, is right in this old NCO mould. He doesn't work well with skilful players. He is not a sophisticated tactician. R W Johnson is right: go for a proven winner, like Dalglish; and better still, go for someone outside the English game.

Finally, R W Johnson's remedies for the dull football in Italy are wide of the goal. Football doesn't need wider goals or ten-a-side. If you make goal-scoring too easy, then you rob the game of its fascination. The new offside rule is a move in the right direction. And it was primarily the penalty shoot-out which made the last World Cup matches so dull. Teams like the Argentinians could hope to hold on throughout the actual match with the hope of winning on penalties. There are various other ways of deciding drawn matches which could privilege attacking play.

John Dennison
King's Lynn

THIS ENGLAND

£5 book tokens for entries printed. (Postcards please)

● It is not a good idea to keep one's butler in service for as long as 90 years, as was the case of this servant. No wonder he was cantankerous.

It is usually a good rule of thumb to retire them on a pension after say 60 years' devoted service, to be succeeded by their sons who have been under-butlers for some 30 years or so, thus making the transition as smooth as possible.—Letter in the *Daily Telegraph* (Martin Wright)

● We talked about life-insurance policies, pension plans and family responsibilities. If it hadn't been for Bruce Dickinson's opening remark when he popped his head round the front door, I could have been talking to my bank manager.

The remark, however—Hang on, I haven't any trousers on—was definitely macho heavy-metal rock-group man.—*Mail on Sunday* magazine (George Moor)

● When workmen put up a new sign in Blackthorne Avenue, Rochester, omitting the final "e" on Blackthorne, residents rang the council to ask if their street had undergone a change of name. They were assured it had not, and that the missing letter would be replaced. The sign now reads Blackthorne Avenu.—*Times* (George Moor)

FRINGE BENEFITS

Cathy never came

Colin Ward

There was something very affecting, both in presentation and content, about Jeremy Sandford's BBC1 feature marking the fact that it's a quarter of a century since he wrote, and Ken Loach directed, *Cathy Come Home*. "Like many a young man's work," he says, "it was written to change the world."

Everyone old enough does remember its impact: the ending of the punitive Poor Law rules in hostels for the homeless; the founding of Shelter and hundreds of local organisations concerned with helping homeless people; the increase in local authority housebuilding. But these gains have been overwhelmed by the losses he unfolds. One is the awfulness of family life in bed-and-breakfast hotels, making fortunes for their entrepreneurial owners at a huge cost to councils fulfilling their statutory duties. Another, in his view, is the great housing cutback by both Labour and Conservative governments. "Council house building sank from nigh on 200,000 homes a year to fewer than 12,000 in England and Wales last year."

Sandford demonstrates that the most dreadful job in Britain is that of the counter clerk in the council office, face to face with 250,000 applicants, and asking them odious questions in order that they may be officially regarded as homeless. And then being unable to do anything to help them. What makes him unusual among people who talk about housing is that he recognises that the most important factor is not what housing *is*, but what it *does* in people's lives. So he gave us a quick visual history of the squatters' movement since 1946, and a reminder of the fact that for the first 40 years of this century poor people could buy a plot in the country for a few pounds to put up their shack, shanty or bungalow which improved over time: something totally outlawed by postwar planning legislation. And with the enthusiasm of an insider, he explored the advantages of tepees and gypsy benders. He had the nerve to add: "I find something epic and beautiful in many of the vehicles, from the 1950s and 1960s, now being re-utilised as homes. Our society throws them away in large numbers. With house prices starting at £35,000 and council flats hard to obtain, a bus which costs a few hundred pounds is a viable and attractive alternative."

Poor Jeremy had to tumble over backwards to explain that while a "mobile home" on a caravan site might be hell for many, it is heaven for some. He is torn (and who isn't?) between his admiration for self-help solutions and his condemnation of government for abandoning council housing. There wasn't time to mention that some of the local authority "solutions" after *Cathy Come Home* have already been demolished as uninhabitable long before the cash borrowed to build them will be paid off.

His gesture is to share his home. "I'm not being frivolous in saying that if more people invited others into their homes it could have a significant effect—there are 22.5 million homes in Britain and if even a tenth of us opened our doors tonight we'd have licked homelessness...the growing habit of living alone is one of the fundamental causes of the housing famine."

It would be wiser to say that a more basic cause is the need to get *away* from other people, like parents or spouses. Free choice demands personal space, as the affluent have always known. But he's right in posing the issue as "either build more houses or make it easier for people to solve their own housing problems." And he is right in his praise for self-build. The obstacles are threefold: speculation in land values, access to finance (taken for granted by all those owner-occupiers) and surmounting the barrage of public regulation.

Self-build doesn't imply that you should learn to lay bricks. It means that you should be in control of your own housing endeavour. The few triumphs since *Cathy Come Home* have been in tenant co-ops in Liverpool, London and Glasgow, including those catering for very poor and homeless people.

Everyone in this field was cheered up last year by the news that the Community Self-Build Agency, set up by the Housing Corporation and the National Federation of Housing Associations, was going to receive £60 million of finance in the next five years from major building societies: the National Provincial and Nationwide Anglia. At last, they thought, the institutional obstacles to self-build have been removed. But now, because of the down-turn in the property market, Eagle Star, the major insurance company underwriting building society loans, has suspended its guarantees on development finance. This obscure market decision is a death-knell for little local groups.

A winning policy is not the direct provision of housing by councils, but *real* support for self-help endeavour, including co-ops, self-build, and the outlawed tent-towns Sandford piloted us around.

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The Age of Lead

This haunting new story by Margaret Atwood, the Canadian novelist and poet, is the first in the NSS*'s season of short stories. Margaret Atwood is one of the world's leading novelists — among her novels are* The Edible Woman, The Handmaid's Tale *and* Cat's Eye. *She has also published seven volumes of poetry.*

Other writers in the series include Sue Townsend (next week), Jenny Diski, James Kelman and Janice Galloway.

The man has been buried for a hundred and fifty years. They dug a hole in the frozen gravel, deep into the permafrost, and put him down there so the wolves couldn't get to him. Or that is the speculation.

When they dug the hole the permafrost was exposed to the air, which was warmer. This made the permafrost melt. But it froze again after the man was covered up, so that when he was brought to the surface he was completely enclosed in ice. They took the lid off the coffin and it was like those maraschino cherries you used to freeze in ice-

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cube trays for fancy tropical drinks: a vague shape, looming through a solid cloud.

Then they melted the ice and he came to light. He is almost the same as when he was buried. The freezing water has pushed his lips away from his teeth into an astonished snarl, and he's a beige colour, like a gravy stain on linen, instead of pink, but everything is still there. He even has eyeballs, except that they aren't white but the light brown of milky tea. With these tea-stained eyes he regards Jane: an indecipherable gaze, innocent, ferocious, amazed, but contemplative, like a werewolf meditating, caught in a flash of lightning at the exact split-second of his tumultuous change.

Jane doesn't watch very much television. She used to watch it more. She used to watch comedy series, in the evenings, and when she was a student at university she would watch afternoon soaps about hospitals and rich people, as a way of procrastinating. For a while, not so long ago, she would watch the evening news, taking in the disasters with her feet tucked up on the chesterfield, a throw rug over her legs, drinking a hot milk and rum to relax before bed. It was all a form of escape.

But what you can see on the television, at whatever time of day, is edging too close to her own life; though in her life, nothing stays put in those tidy compartments, comedy here, seedy romance and sentimental tears there, accidents and violent deaths in thirty-second clips they call *bites*, as if they are chocolate bars. In her life, everything is mixed together. *Laugh, I thought I'd die*, Vincent used to say, a very long time ago, in a voice imitating the banality of mothers; and that's how it's getting to be. So when she flicks on the television these days, she flicks it off again soon enough. Even the commercials, with their surreal dailiness, are beginning to look sinister, to suggest meanings behind themselves, behind their facade of cleanliness, lusciousness, health, power and speed.

Tonight she leaves the television on, because what she is seeing is so unlike what she usually sees. There is nothing sinister behind this image of the frozen man. It is entirely itself. *What you see is what you gets*, as Vincent also used to say, crossing his eyes, baring his teeth at one side, pushing his nose into a horror-movie snout. Although it never was, with him.

The man they've dug up and melted was a young man. Or still is: it's difficult to know what tense should be applied to him, he is so insistently present. Despite the distortions caused by the ice and the emaciation of his illness, you can see his youthfulness, the absence of toughening, of wear. According to the dates painted carefully onto his name-plate, he was only 20 years old. His name was John Torrington. He was, or is, a sailor, a seaman. He wasn't an able-bodied seaman though; he was a petty officer, one of those marginally in command. Being in command has little to do with the ableness of the body.

He was one of the first to die. That is why he got a coffin and a metal name-plate, and a deep

hole in the permafrost—because they still had the energy, and the piety, for such things, that early. There would have been a burial service read over him, and prayers. As time went on and became nebulous and things did not get better, they must have kept the energy for themselves; and also the prayers. The prayers would have ceased to be routine and become desperate, and then hopeless. The later dead ones got cairns of piled stones, and the much later ones not even that. They ended up as bones, and as the soles of boots and the occasional button, sprinkled over the frozen stony treeless relentless ground in a trail heading south. It was like the trails in fairy tales, of breadcrumbs or seeds or white stones. But in this case nothing had sprouted or lit up in the moonlight, forming a miraculous pathway to life; no rescuers had followed. It took ten years before anyone knew even the barest beginnings of what had been happening to them.

All of them together were the Franklin Expedition. Jane has seldom paid much attention to history except when it has overlapped with her knowledge of antique furniture and real estate—"19th C. pine harvest table", or "prime location Georgian centre hall, impeccable reno"—but she knows what the Franklin Expedition was. The two ships with their bad-luck names have been on stamps—the *Terror*, the *Erebus*. Also she took it in school, along with a lot of other doomed expeditions. Not many of those explorers seemed to have come out of it very well. They were always getting scurvy or lost.

What the Franklin Expedition was looking for was the Northwest Passage, an open seaway across the top of the Artic, so people, merchants, could get to India from England without going all the way around South America. They wanted to go that way because it would cost less, and increase their profits. This was much less exotic than Marco Polo or the headwaters of the Nile; nevertheless, the idea of exploration appealed to her then: to get onto a boat and just go somewhere, somewhere mapless, off into the unknown. To launch yourself into fright; to find things out. There was something daring and noble about it, despite all of the losses and failures, or perhaps because of them. It was like having sex, in high school, in those days before the Pill, even if you took precautions. If you were a girl, that is. If you were a boy, for whom such a risk was fairly minimal, you had to do other things: things with weapons or large amounts of alcohol, or high-speed vehicles, which at her suburban Toronto high school, back then at the beginning of the sixties, meant switchblades, beer, and drag races down the main streets on Saturday nights.

Now, gazing at the television as the lozenge of ice gradually melts and the outline of the yong sailor's body clears and sharpens, Jane remembers Vincent, 16 and with more hair then, quirking one eyebrow and lifting his lip in a mock sneer and saying, "Frankin, my dear, I don't give a damn." He said it loud enough to be heard, but the history teacher ignored him, not knowing what else to do. It was hard for the

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Rod Judkins

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teachers to keep Vincent in line, because he never seemed to be afraid of anything that might happen to him.

He was hollow-eyed even then; he frequently looked as if he'd been up all night. Even then he resembled a very young old man, or else a dissipated child. The dark circles under his eyes were the ancient part, but when he smiled he had lovely small white teeth, like the magazine ads for baby foods. He made fun of everything, and was adored. He wasn't adored the way other boys were adored, those boys with surly lower lips and greased hair and a studied air of smouldering menace. He was adored like a pet. Not a dog, but a cat. He went where he liked, and nobody owned him. Nobody called him *Vince*.

Strangely enough, Jane's mother approved of him. She didn't usually approve of the boys Jane went out with. Maybe she approved of him because it was obvious to her that no bad results would follow from Jane's going out with him: no heartaches, no heaviness, nothing burdensome. None of what she called *consequences*. Consequences: the weightiness of the body, the growing flesh hauled around like a bundle, the tiny frill-framed goblin head in the carriage. Babies and marriage, in that order. This was how she understood men and their furtive, fumbling, threatening desires, because Jane herself had been a consequence. She had been a mistake, she had been a war baby. She had been a crime that had needed to be paid for, over and over.

By the time she was 16, Jane had heard enough about this to last her several lifetimes. In her mother's account of the way things were, you were young briefly and then you fell. You plummeted downwards like a ripe apple and hit the ground with a squash; you fell, and everything about you fell too. You got fallen arches and a fallen womb, and your hair and teeth fell out. That's what having a baby did to you. It subjected you to the force of gravity.

This is how she remembers her mother, still: in terms of a pendulous, drooping, wilting motion. Her sagging breasts, the downturned lines around her mouth. Jane conjures her up: there she is, as usual, sitting at the kitchen table with a cup of cooling tea, exhausted after her job clerking at Eaton's department store, standing upright all day behind the jewellery counter with her bum stuffed into a girdle and her swelling feet crammed into the mandatory medium-heeled shoes, smiling her envious, disapproving smile at the spoiled customers who turned up their noses at pieces of glittering junk she herself could never afford to buy. Jane's mother sighs, picked at the canned spaghetti Jane has heated up for her. Silent words waft out of her like stale talcum powder: *What can you expect*, always a statement, never a question. Jane tries at this distance for pity, but comes up with none.

As for Jane's father, he'd run away from home when Jane was five, leaving her mother in the lurch. That's what her mother called it—"running away from home", as if he'd been an irresponsible child. Money arrived from time to time, but that was the sum total of his contribution to family life. Jane resented him for it, but she didn't blame him. Her mother inspired in almost everyone who encountered her a vicious desire for escape.

Jane and Vincent would sit out in the cramped backyard of Jane's house, which was one of the squinty-windowed little stuccoed wartime bungalows at the bottom of the hill. At the top of the hill were the richer houses, and the richer people: the girls who owned cashmere sweaters, at least one of them, instead of the orlon and lambswool so familar to Jane. Vincent lived about halfway up the hill. He still had a father, in theory. They would sit against the back fence, near the spindly cosmos flowers that passed for a garden, as far away from the house itself as they could get. They would drink gin, decanted by Vincent from his father's liquor hoard and smuggled in an old military pocket flask he'd picked up somewhere. They would imitate their mothers.

"I pinch and scrape and I work my fingers to the bone, and what thanks do I get?" Vincent would say peevishly. "No help from you, Sonny Boy. You're just like your father. Free as the birds, out all night, do as you like and you don't care one pin about anyone else's feelings. Now take out that garbage."

They tangoed under the tissue-paper flowers, cutting a black swathe through the sea of pastel tulle

"It's love that does it to you," Jane would reply, in the resigned ponderous voice of her mother. "You wait and see, my girl. One of these days you'll come down off your devil-may-care high horse." As Jane said this, and even though she was making fun, she could picture Love, with a capital L, descending out of the sky towards her like a huge foot. Her mother's life had been a disaster, but in her own view an inevitable disaster, as in songs and movies. It was Love that was responsible, and in the face of Love, what could be done? Love was like a steamroller. There was no avoiding it, it went over you and you came out flat.

Jane's mother waited, fearfully and uttering warnings but with a sort of gloating relish for the same thing to happen to Jane. Every time Jane went out with a new boy her mother inspected him as a potential agent of downfall. She distrusted most of these boys; she distrusted their sulky, pulpy mouths, their eyes half-closed in the updrifting smoke of their cigarettes, their slow, sauntering manner of walking, their clothing that was too tight, too full, too full of their bodies. They looked this way even when they weren't putting on the sulks and swaggers, when they were trying to appear bright-eyed and industrious and polite for Jane's mother's benefit, saying goodbye at the front door, dressed in their shirts and ties and their pressed heavy-date suits. They couldn't help the way they looked, they way they were. They were helpless; one kiss in a dark corner would reduce them to speechlessness, they were sleepwalkers in their own liquid bodies. Jane on the other hand was wide awake.

Jane and Vincent did not exactly go out together. Instead they made fun of going out. When the coast was clear and Jane's mother wasn't home, Vincent would appear at the door with his face painted bright yellow, and Jane would put her bathrobe on back to front and they would order Chinese food and alarm the delivery boy and eat sitting cross-legged on the floor, clumsily, with chopsticks. Or Vincent would turn up in a threadbare thirty-year-old suit and a bowler hat and a cane, and Jane would rummage around in the cupboard for a discarded church-going hat of her mother's, with smashed cloth violets and a veil, and they would go downtown and walk around, making loud remarks about the passers-by, pretending to be old, or poor, or crazy. It was thoughtless and in bad taste, which was what they both liked about it.

Vincent took Jane to the graduation formal, and they picked out her dress together at one of the second-hand clothing shops Vincent frequented, giggling at the shock and admiration they hoped to cause. They hesitated between a flame-red with falling-off sequins and a backless hip-hugging black with a plunge front, and chose the black, to go with Jane's hair. Vincent sent a poisonous-looking lime-green orchid, the colour of her eyes he said, and Jane painted her eyelids and fingernails to match. Vincent wore white tie and tails, and a top hat, all-frayed Sally-Ann issue, and ludicrously too large for him. They tangoed around the gymnasium, even though the music was not a tango, under the tissue-paper flowers, cutting a black swathe through the sea of pastel tulle, unsmiling, projecting a corny sexual menace, Vincent with Jane's long pearl necklace clenched between his teeth.

The applause was mostly for him, because of the way he was adored. Though mostly by the girls, thinks Jane. But he seemed to be popular enough among the boys as well. Probably he told them dirty jokes, in the proverbial locker room. He knew enough of them. As he dipped Jane backwards, he dropped the pearls and whispered into her ear, "No belts, no pins, no pads, no chafing". It was from an ad for tampons, but it was also their leitmotif. It was what they both wanted: freedom from the world of mothers, the world of precautions, the world of burdens and fate and heavy female constraints upon the flesh. They wanted a life without consequences. Until recently, they'd managed it.

The scientists have melted the entire length of the young sailor now, at least the upper layer of him. They've been pouring warm water over him, gently and patiently; they don't want to thaw him too abruptly. It's as if John Torrington is asleep and they don't want to startle him.

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Now his feet have been revealed. They're bare, and white rather than beige; they look like the feet of someone who's been walking on a cold floor, on a winter day. That is the quality of the light they reflect: winter sunlight, in early morning. There is something intensely painful to Jane about the absence of socks. They could have left him his socks. But maybe the others needed them. His big toes are tied together; the man talking says this was to keep the body tidily packaged for burial, but Jane is not convinced. His arms are tied to his body, his ankles are tied together. You do that when you don't want a person walking around.

This part is almost too much for Jane, it is too reminiscent. She reaches for the channel switcher, but luckily the show (it is only a show, it's only another show) changes to two of the historical experts, analysing the clothing. There's a close-up of John Torrington's shirt, a simple high-collared pinstriped white and blue cotton, with mother of pearl buttons. The stripes are a printed pattern, rather than a woven one; woven would have been more expensive. The trousers are grey linen. Ah, thinks Jane. Wardrobe. She feels better: this is something she knows about. She loves the solemnity, the reverence, with which the stripes and buttons are discussed. An interest in the clothing of the present is frivolity, an interest in the clothing of the past is archaeology; a point Vincent would have appreciated.

After high school, Jane and Vincent both got scholarships to university, although Vincent had appeared to study less, and did better. That summer they did everything together. They got summer jobs at the same hamburger heaven, they went to movies together after work, although Vincent never paid for Jane. They still occasionally dressed up in old clothes and went downtown and pretended to be a weird couple, but it no longer felt careless and filled with absurd invention. It was beginning to occur to them that they might conceivably end up looking like that.

In her first year at university Jane stopped going out with other boys: she needed a part-time job to help pay her way, and that and the schoolwork and Vincent took up all her time. She thought she might be in love with Vincent. She thought that maybe they should make love, to find out. She had never done such a thing, entirely; she had been too afraid of the untrustworthiness of men, of the gravity of love, too afraid of consequences. She thought however, that she might trust Vincent.

But things didn't go that way. They held hands, but they didn't hug; they hugged, but they didn't pet; they kissed, but they didn't neck. Vincent liked looking at her, but he liked it so much he would never close his eyes. She would close hers and then open them, and there would be Vincent, his own eyes shining in the light from the streetlamp or the moon, peering at her inquisitively as if waiting to see what odd female thing she would do next, for his delighted amusement. Making love with Vincent did not seem altogether possible.

(Later, after she had flung herself into the current of opinion that had swollen to a river by the late sixties, she no longer said "making love", she said "having sex". But it amounted to the same thing. You had sex, and love got made out of it whether you liked it or not. You woke up in bed or more likely on a mattress, with an arm around you, and found yourself wondering what it might be like to keep on doing it. At that point Jane would start looking at her watch. She had no intention of being left in any lurches. She would do the leaving herself. And she did.)

Jane and Vincent wandered off to different cities. They wrote each other postcards. Jane did this and that. She ran a co-op food store in Vancouver, did the financial stuff for a diminutive theatre in Montreal, acted as managing editor for a small publisher, ran the publicity for a dance company. She had a head for details and for adding up small sums—having to scrape her way through university had been instructive—and such jobs were often available if you didn't demand much money for doing them. Jane could see no reason to tie herself down, to make any sort of soul-stunting commitment, to anything or anyone. It was the early seventies; the old heavy women's world of girdles and precautions and consequences had been swept away. There were a lot of windows opening, a lot of doors: you could look in, then you could go in, then you could come out again.

She lived with several men, but in each of the apartments there were always cardboard boxes, belonging to her, that she never got around to unpacking; just as well, because it was that much easier to move out. When she got past thirty she decided it might be nice to have a child, sometime, later. She tried to figure out a way of doing this without becoming a mother. Her own mother had moved to Florida, and sent rambling, grumbling letters, to which Jane did not often reply.

Jane moved back to Toronto, and found it ten times more interesting than when she'd left it. Vincent was already there. He'd come back from Europe, where he'd been studying film; he'd opened a design studio. He and Jane met for lunch, and it was the same: the same air of conspiracy between them, the same sense of their own potential for outrageousness. They might still have been sitting in Jane's garden, beside the cosmos flowers, drinking forbidden gin and making fun.

Jane found herself moving in Vincent's circles, or were they orbits? Vincent knew a great many people, people of all kinds; some were artists and some wanted to be, and some wanted to know the ones who were. Some had money to begin with, some made money ; they all spent it. There was a lot more talk about money, these days, or among these people. Few of them knew how to manage it, and Jane found herself helping them out. She developed a small business among them, handling their money. She would gather it in, put it away safely for them, tell them what they could spend, dole out an allowance. She would note with interest the things they bought, filing their receipted bills: what furniture, what clothing, which *objets*. They were delighted with their money, enchanted with it. It was like milk and cookies for them after school. Watching them play with their money, Jane felt responsible and indulgent, and a little matronly. She stored her own money carefully away, and eventually bought a townhouse with it.

All this time she was with Vincent, more or less. They'd tried being lovers but had not made a success of it. Vincent had gone along with this scheme because Jane had wanted it, but he was elusive, he would not make declarations. What worked with other men did not work with him: appeals to his protective instincts, pretences at jealousy, requests to remove stuck lids from jars. Sex with him was more like a musical work-out. He couldn't take it seriously, and accused her of being too solemn about it. She thought he might be gay, but was afraid to ask him; she dreaded feeling irrelevant to him, excluded. It took them months to get back to normal.

He was older now, they both were. He had thinning temples and a widow's peak, and his bright inquisitive eyes had receded even further into his head. What went on between them continued to look like a courtship, but was not one. He was always bringing her things: a new, peculiar food to eat, a new grotesquerie to see, a new piece of gossip, which he would present to her with a sense of occasion, like a flower. She in her turn appreciated him. It was like a yogic exercise, appreciating Vincent; it was like appreciating an anchovy, or a stone. He was not everyone's taste.

There's a black and white print on the televi-

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sion, then another: the nineteenth century's version of itself, in etchings. Sir John Franklin, older and fatter than Jane had supposed; the *Terror* and the *Erebus*, locked fast in the crush of the ice. In the high arctic, a hundred and fifty years ago, it's the dead of winter. There is no sun at all, no moon; only the rustling northern lights, like electronic music, and the hard little stars.

What did they do for love, on such a ship, at such a time? Furtive solitary gropings, confused and mournful dreams, the sublimation of novels. The usual, among those who have become solitary.

Down in the hold, surrounded by the creaking of the wooden hull and the stale odours of men far too long enclosed, John Torrington lies dying. He must have known it; you can see it on his face. He turns towards Jane his tea-coloured look of puzzled reproach.

Who held his hand, who read to him, who brought him water? Who if anyone loved him? And what did they tell him, about whatever it was that was killing him? Consumption, brain fever, Original Sin. All these Victorian reasons, which meant nothing and were the wrong ones. But they must have been comforting. If you are dying, you want to know why.

In the eighties, things started to slide. Toronto was not so much fun any more. There were too many people, too many poor people. You could see them begging on the streets, which were clogged with fumes and cars. The cheap artists' studios were torn down or converted to coy and upscale office space, the artists had migrated elsewhere. Whole streets were torn up or knocked down. The air was full of wind-blown grit.

People were dying. They were dying too early. One of Jane's clients, a man who owned an antique store, died almost overnight of bone cancer. Another, a woman who was an entertainment lawyer, was trying on a dress in a boutique and had a heart attack. She fell over and they called the ambulance, and she was dead on arrival. A theatrical producer died of Aids, and a photographer; the lover of the photographer shot himself, either out of grief or because he knew he was next. A friend of a friend died of emphysema, another of viral pneumonia, another of hepatitis picked up on a tropical vacation, another of spinal meningitis. It was as if they had been weakened by some mysterious agent, a thing like a colourless gas, scentless and invisible, so that any germ that happened along could invade their bodies, take them over.

Jane began to notice news items of the kind she'd once skimmed over. Maple groves dying of acid rain, hormones in the beef, mercury in the fish, pesticides in the vegetables, poison sprayed on the fruit, God knows what in the drinking water. She subscribe to a bottled springwater service and felt better for a few weeks, then read in the paper that it wouldn't do her much good, because whatever it was had been seeping into everything. Each time you took a breath, you breathed some of it in. She thought about moving out of the city, then read about the toxic dumps, radioactive waste, concealed here and there in the countryside and masked by the lush, deceitful green of wavering trees.

Vincent had been dead for less than a year. He was not put into the permafrost or frozen in ice. He went into the Necropolis, the only Toronto cemetery of whose general ambience he approved; he got flower bulbs planted on top of him, by Jane and others. Mostly by Jane. Right now John Torrington, recently thawed after a hundred and fifty years, probably looks better than Vincent.

A week before Vincent's forty-third birthday, Jane went to see him in the hospital. He was in for tests. Like fun he was. He was in for the unspeakable, the unknown. He was in for a mutated virus that didn't even have a name yet. It was creeping up his spine, and when it reached his brain it would kill him. It was not, as they said, responding to treatment. He was in for the duration.

It was white in his room, wintry. He lay packed in ice, for the pain. A white sheet wrapped him, his white thin feet poked out the bottom of it. They were so pale and cold. Jane took one look at him, laid out on ice like a salmon, and began to cry.

He was always bringing her things: a new, peculiar food to eat, a new grotesquerie to see

"Oh Vincent," she said. "What will I do without you?" This sounded awful. It sounded like Jane and Vincent making fun, of obsolete books, obsolete movies, their obsolete mothers. It also sounded selfish: here she was, worrying about herself and her future, when Vincent was the one who was sick. But it was true. There would be a lot less to do, altogether, without Vincent.

Vincent gazed up at her; the shadows under his eyes were cavernous. "Lighten up," he said, not very loudly, because he could not speak very loudly now. By this time she was sitting down, leaning forward; she was holding one of his hands. It was as thin as the claw of a bird. "Who says I'm going to die?" He spent a moment considering this, revised it. "You're right," he said, "They got me. It was the Pod People from outer space. They said, 'All I want is your poddy.'"

Jane cried more. It was worse because he was trying to be funny. "But what *is* it?" she said. "Have they found out yet?"

Vincent smiled his ancient, jaunty smile, his smile of detachment, of amusement. There were his beautiful teeth, juvenile as ever. "Who knows?" he said. "It must have been something I ate."

Jane sat with the tears running down her face. She felt desolate: left behind, stranded. Their mothers had finally caught up to them and been proven right. There were consequences after all; but they were the consequnces to things you didn't even know you'd done.

The scientists were back on the screen. They are excited, their earnest mouths are twitching, you could almost call them joyful. They know why John Torrington died; they know, at last, why the Franklin Expedition went so terribly wrong. They've snipped of pieces of John Torrington, a fingernail, a lock of hair, they've run them through machines and come out with the answers.

There is a shot of an old tin can, pulled open to show the seam. It looks like a bomb casing. A finger points: it was the tin cans that did it, a new invention back then, a new technology, the ultimate defence against starvation and scurvy. The Franklin Expedition was excellently provisioned with tin cans, stuffed full of meat and soup and soldered together with lead. The whole expedition got lead poisoning. Nobody knew it. Nobody could taste it. It invaded their bones, their lungs, their brains, weakening them and confusing their thinking, so that at the end those that had not yet died in the ships set out in an idiotic trek across the stony, icy ground, pulling a lifeboat laden down with toothbrushes, soap, handkerchiefs and slippers, useless pices of junk. When they were found (ten years later, skeletons in tattered coats, lying where they'd collapsed) they were headed back towards the ships. It was what they'd been eating that had killed them.

Jane switches off the television and goes into her kitchen—all white, done over the year before last, the outmoded butcher-block counters from the seventies torn out and carted away—to make heself some hot milk and rum. Then she decides against it; she won't sleep anyway. Everything in here looks ownerless. Her toaster oven, so perfect for solo dining, her microwave for the vegetables, her espresso maker—they're sitting around waiting for her departure, for this evening or forever, in order to assume their final, real appearance of purposeless objects adrift in the physical world. They might as well be pieces of an exploded spaceship orbiting the moon.

She thinks about Vincent's apartment, so carefully arranged, filled with the beautiful or deliberately-ugly possessions he once loved. She thinks about his closet, with its quirky particular outfits, empty now of his arms and legs. It has all been broken up now, sold, given away.

Increasingly the sidewalk that runs past her house is cluttered with plastic drinking cups, crumpled soft-drink cans, used take-out plates. She picks them up, clears them away, but they appear again overnight, like a trail left by an army on the march or by the fleeting residents of a city under bombardment, discarding the objects that were once thought essential but are now too heavy to carry.

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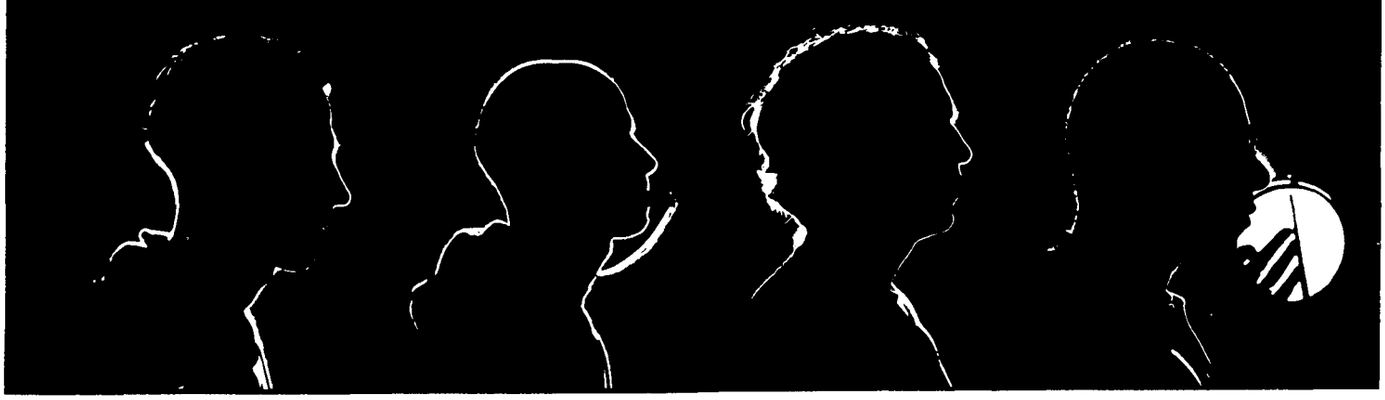

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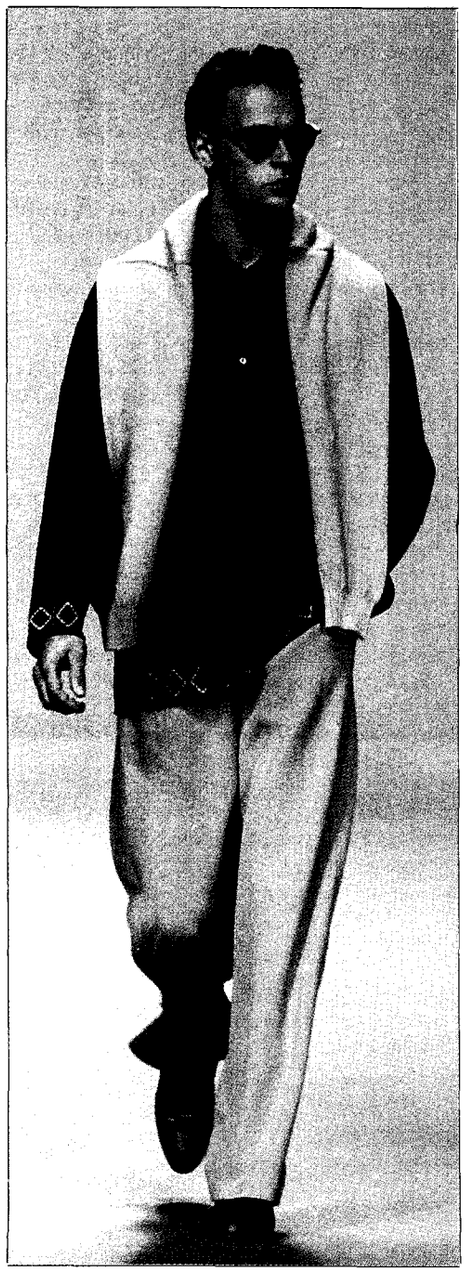
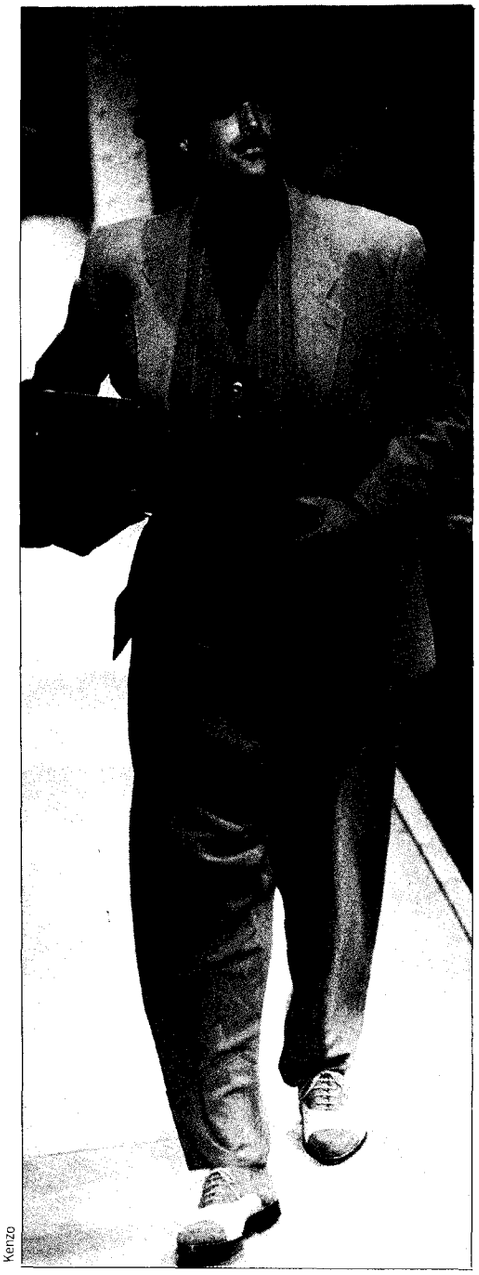


Dior



Kenzo

YSL

Chris Moore

Beyond bondage

From Showman to Man in the Street, the dress code for men has loosened up, as Paula Reed reports

Of all the images of the modern lifestyle that were churned out in the eighties, the definition of the modern man was most radically re-assessed. Terms like "renaissance man" and "new man", first used in advertising circles and marketing blurb, were pedalled by the media as if they were the key to a dawning utopia. From the cosy confines of stereotyped machismo (betting shop, business suit and nights in the pub with the lads), the man in the street was forced to run the gauntlet of gender bending, role reversal and sexual politics. And then designers dressed them in skirts or black priestly robes; proposed full make up, then a quarter inch stubble; foppish lace, then biker leather and distressed denim.

By the end of the decade there was a feeble re-emergence of the "real man" but by that stage no one knew quite what he was supposed to look like. The first menswear collections of the nineties, which have just been shown in Paris, went some way to resolving the dilemma of the modern male identity and, for the first time in many seasons, saw designers abandoning their dictatorial stance and offering more easy-going and less self-conscious images.

As early as 1986, French writer Marie Rose

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Litvan categorised the subtleties of this identity crisis, and outlined three types: the Man in the Street, who considered himself to be outside fashion, rejected flamboyance and made his particular statement by wearing comfortable, practical clothes. Then there was the Executive who wanted clothes to enhance his professional status, and the Showman, who sought to rebel and shock, expressing himself visually through his choice of clothes and settling in with the avant-garde.

Litvan's recently published "Study on Men's Clothing" for the International Wool Secretariat, insists that these categories are still loosely intact but have been blurred by the cross-fertilisation of ideas. Because some of the wilder notions, previously only acceptable to the Showman, have had a chance to settle, they are now more acceptable to the Man in the Street, while the eighties image of the businessman as super-hero has loosened up the restrictions imposed on the dress code of the executive. This leaves the Showman somewhat exasperated by these trespassing "squares" and he finds himself wondering if life should really be governed by a Gaultier bondage suit.

The upshot of these conflicting options, as men try to reconcile the various images of themselves, seems likely to be a rejection of advice from the appointed experts and a more relaxed reliance on the individual's ability to identify his personal style. A new confidence is emerging from the knowledge that, having seen what fashion has to offer (ranging from the sublime Italian unstructured suit to the ridiculous Belgian Y-Front and plastic mac combination), most men know when to take it or leave it and are no longer intimidated by the dogmatic strategists in the style wars.

In addition, a shift in social priorities has reduced the importance of fashion. The reluctant dresser now rests secure in the knowledge that there is more social kudos in unleaded fuel and recycled paper than a shopping bag with an unpronouncable Japanese designer label inside. But, having absorbed the lessons of the last decade he finds himself better at the fashion game than he ever thought he would be.

The British streets are not yet awash with walking fashion plates of sartorial perfection. But men have emerged from the confusion unwilling to return to the austere male image of the past and find themselves more comfortable with bright colours, less structured untailored suit shapes, even prints.

The new confidence is supported by the media, which are wholeheartedly embracing this new image of the sensitive male. One of the most popular contemporary advertising images is the good-looking, smiling father figure with child, shopping or laundry. The naked male body sells everything from financial services to body lotion. Old macho role model, Sylvester Stallone, wears wire-rimmed spectacles and soft suits, and the new role models like Johnny Depp follow strict macrobiotic diets and are fiercely monogamous.

Levi has dropped its muscle-bound poseur stripping down to his shorts in the launderette and replaced him with regular guys with unremarkable torsos who simply love to wear jeans.

The power of a market confident that it knows what it wants turns design studios on their heads. As a result, Japanese designers, previously the prophets of matt-black asymmetry, now feature powdery colours, and the French champions of restrictive tailoring embrace the tracksuit and sweat-shirt. The most successful designers are the ones who gently re-interpret classics. Some of the best ideas from the spring/summer 1991 menswear collections came from Katharine Hamnett, whose dark double-breasted suits highlighted with pale pastel shirts co-existed with traditional safari jackets, velour, track-inspired separates, and textured tartans. Sonia Rykiel showed her first menswear collection for *"l'homme avec l'esprit de vie"* who accordingly lives in soft jerseys and American-style sportswear. Other favourites like Kenzo and Yohji Yamamoto relied on an adventurous use of colour.

Advertising

In the fast lane with nice men

Tony Chapman on the men who cuddle teddies in the boardroom

Once upon a time, real men could just throw caution to the wind and state gruffly that "it doesn't bother me". This, of course, was in the eighties when one felt safe driving to the City in a black GTi ZXR through burning buildings while being pursued by a panzer division—and all because the lady loved Milk Tray. But now, in the nineties when we are told real men care, what's a man to do?

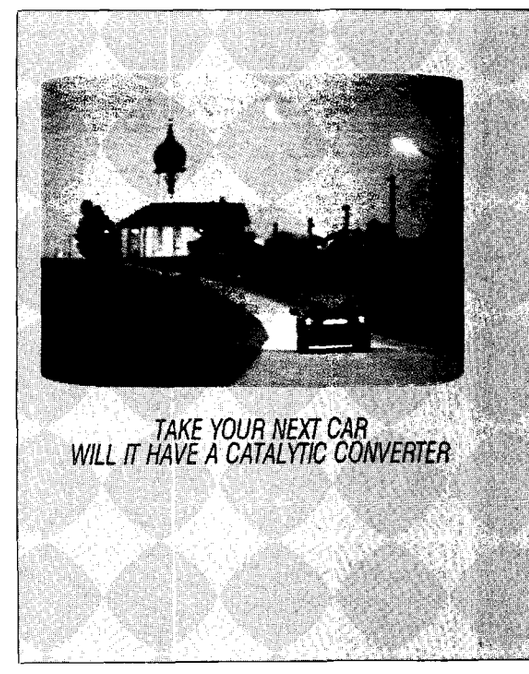
The advertisers believe that it is now trendy for men to be nice. What's so worrying about that? Surely men should be serious about becoming more caring; it is not something to be played at just to impress one's friends. But what about those other trendy men, who were once happy to act the bastard and who have now cast aside their flip charts and started cuddling their teddies in the boardroom?

The copywriter's ideal male image is exemplified in car advertisements. In the last decade, forever smitten men were encouraged to destroy the environment by belting through the burning savannah in their new Vauxhalls. We were told quite unpretentiously that cars were a male preserve by Ford, when they referred to the fact that in their models "man and machine (were) in perfect harmony". Even the tame Montego used to smash shop windows.

When women figured at all in advertisements (except as glamorous appendages) they were portrayed in the male-as-norm mode, engaging in oneupmanship with their male partner (financial or otherwise). Women were rarely represented as genuinely independent. Take the example of one angry and jilted blonde in a red dress, who discards jewellery and furs *en route* from the ex's mews but decides to keep the car, demonstrating to a largely male and willy-conscious car-buying audience that the only way a woman can get a gleaming new VW is by seeking the favours of a man.

The current phase of depicting caring men in their safety-first motors leaves little room for praise. Why should only men be trusted to safeguard a family in transit? Indeed, even the practical and, until recently, asexual Volvo is driven through a plate-glass window from a great height by a model male—as opposed to a

The man who cares: storyboard details from the Audi advertisement on television



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male model. It seems doubly ironic that advertisers actually seem to encourage men to drive so *fast* just because they have snazzy anti-lock brakes and crumple bars.

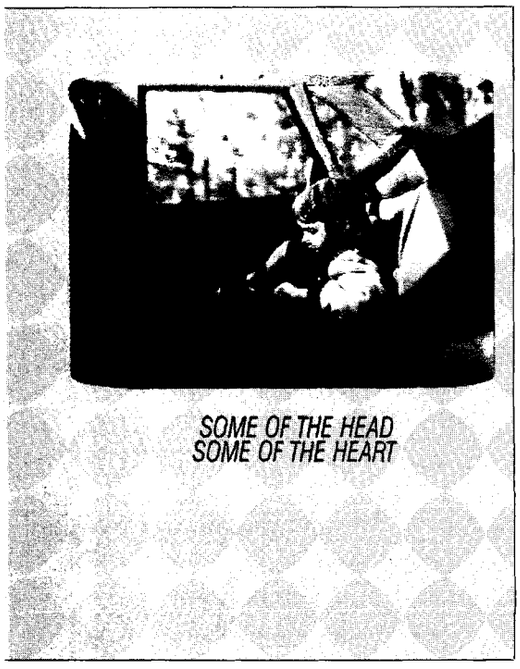
But the problem runs deeper than this. Take for example the ubiquitous Fiat Tipo advertisement where a little boy has decided to leave home. Mummy can't cope (they never can in the world of advertising) and she calls Daddy, who roars into centre stage in a black hatchback, smug and smooth, notwithstanding tousled hair and tweed jacket.

He proceeds to bully the child unashamedly by leading him to his bedroom and packing his clothes, deriding his security symbols (the teddy), and tells him with malice that he'll need all these things because Mummy won't be there to help—naturally, married to a shit like this she isn't likely to intervene.

"Where shall I drop you then?" Daddy asks, having undermined the child's confidence to such an extent that he comes out from his hiding place behind the back of the car and gives Daddy a cuddle, simpering just like Mummy does—which is as it should be, of course, for the reconstructed caring male who knows exactly where the power lies.

One is forced to wonder which is more dangerous—portraying men as lean, mean fighting machines whose principal aim in life is to have sex with as many women as is humanly possible, as in Tennants Extra and Gillette advertisements. Or by giving the impression that tokenism is tantamount to sharing. In reality, it may simply reinforce notions of personal power.

But let's not be too critical of these fictional tales of caring men. It's only a bit of fun. Nobody surely would take seriously a man who is too busy even to be with his wife when she is giving birth to his child; and to cap it all, accidentally leaves his other child ("sorry, what's your name again?") in the car, having risked his life while racing like a madman to the maternity hospital.



Straining the eye: Arthur Boyd's "The Australian Scapegoat" (1987)

Art

Fiery fantasies

Arthur Boyd's paintings have the power to shock, says David Langsam

For his 70th birthday, **Arthur Boyd** is gaining the wider recognition in Britain that his work has long deserved.

He has been praised by the Keeper of the Tate's modern collection, Richard Morphet, as "an excellent artist of high standing", but the Tate is yet to acquire a sample of the leading Australian artist's work. Despite living much of the past 30 years in Britain and receiving recognition from some art critics (he has made it to the cover of this month's *Modern Painters*), Boyd is barely known to the wider arts market.

The neglect is possibly due to his use of colour and content which might shock an unaccustomed eye. Boyd's exhibition of large oil paintings, lithographs and drawings (Fisher Fine Art Gallery, King Street, London SW1, until 3 August) is a bright contrast to the drab grey streets. His subject matter is equally raw.

The cartoon-like works are deceptively simple, carrying complex fantasies and covering a vast range of themes. A few days before his death, *Modern Painters*' editor, Peter Fuller, described Boyd's work as "a most hostile environment, this fiery maelstrom, and a concern with an idyllic evocation of a childhood paradise".

The 14′ x 9′ "Australian Scapegoat 1987" has a soldier copulating with a crying goat wearing a crown of thorns. The soldier pokes his tongue at the sunset over the Deben River mudflats (Boyd poking his tongue at his own sunset?) with the tyre stuck in the slime and a church tower in the background watching over the land. Boyd says the white skate face up on the mud in the Suffolk foreground is an image from Melbourne in the fifties when a fisherman would dump inedible fish on the beach.

The scapegoat, says Boyd, is partly inspired by the Holman Hunt work and symbolises the young soldiers sent to war and paying the price for their leaders' mistakes. "It was the poor that were being punished for no crime of their own. There is only one thing armies are for and that's to kill. So it's the bloke who does the killing that is the scapegoat."

Boyd agrees that opposing soldiers have more in common with each other than the men who send them to die. He says the Australian uniform is incidental. It could be any young soldier anywhere.

Like his images, Boyd's colours seem to be a problem for some people. The photographs in the catalogue don't do his work justice at all. The quality of light is so different between the United Kingdom and Australia that the printers seem to have turned the brightness control down several notches to make them "normal". The colours *are* that bright.

And the gallery is concerned that lumps of paint sticking out from the canvas will be damaged by visitors touching them, but the artist's tactile passion for painting with his fingers is one he wants to share. "Black Pool" and "Queen of the Night", from "The Magic Flute" series, have large water flowers composed of great thick lumps of oil paint stuck to the canvas. The painting jumps from the wall.

While "The Magic Flute" paintings are on sale, the images will end up as backdrops (some 100′ across), illustrations and costume ideas for a Mozart 200th anniversary next year, scheduled for London, Germany, Sydney and New York. "Cave with Light" has a burst of blinding yellow light from a hurricane lamp in a Freudian cave, with Papageno and Papagena depicted as fighting chickens-cum-lyrebirds. A black cockatoo hovers menacingly above.

The current retrospective is an entertaining and stimulating tribute to an artist whose time for mass recognition in Britain is long overdue.

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Film

Brain vs brawn

Suzanne Moore on the hero as alien

We may not need any more heroes but Hollywood insists on churning them out anyway. They come in all shapes and sizes, from the diminutive Marty McFly of *Back to the Future 3* (be warned kids—Pepsi stunts your growth) to Warren Beatty's *Dick Tracy*. It's no coincidence that both films have to go back in time to give credibility to their good guy heroes. The very idea of the morally pure hero looks more and more unrealistic and has been replaced by sheer physical force and a large dose of special effects. The action men of the eighties such as Stallone, Schwarzenegger and their poor relations like Chuck Norris degenerated into little more than killing machines. The best of these films, such as *The Terminator* and *Robocop*, actually feature these man-machines as *characters* in a perfect combination of techno-flesh with techno-flash.

Now it's almost as if no single genre can be trusted to provide us with a credible hero. Both this week's films, *Dark Angel* and *Blind Fury*, are strange genre mutations. *Dark Angel* is a cop/action/comedy/alien movie, while *Blind Fury* is a Vietnam vet/action/comedy/disability movie. If you are confused it might be because the notion of genre—a long-time staple of film criticism—is looking redundant in the face of so many recent movies. It's fitting too that *Dark Angel* and *Blind Fury*, these seemingly all-American films, feature a Swede and a Dutchman in the leading roles. The Euroman cometh.

Dolph Lundgren, ex-chemical engineering student, ex-karate champion and, more famously, an ex-boyfriend of Grace Jones, is the star of *Dark Angel*. Destined to be forever compared to Arnold Schwarzenegger because of his muscles and the trace of accent, he is an actor whose emotional range makes Arnie look like Marlon Brando. But Dolph, rather like a page-three girl who insists on singing, will not accept his limitations. Bimbos, I'm afraid, are bimbos whether they are male or female.

This need to appear as brain as well as brawn is built into the film itself. So Jack Caine, a tough Houston vice cop, is actually a sensitive man underneath. How do we know? Because in his apartment there is a painting and the guy drinks wine instead of beer. Vino and art, you don't get any more refined than that. Well, not in these kinds of films anyway.

Actually *Dark Angel* is tightly edited enjoyable nonsense directed by Craig Baxley who made the blaxploitation thriller *Action Jackson*. When Caine's partner is killed he gets paired up with anal-retentive FBI man, Smith. We're soon into the instinct versus objectivity argument, Dolph of course being all instinct. The case they are investigating involves drug dealers from outer space who extract endorphins from their human victims—a kind of intergalactic super drug. They also kill people with flying compact discs.

Action men of the eighties give way to the credible hero: Rutger Hauer in *Blind Fury* (top) and Dolph Lundgren in *Dark Angel*

Overall, it's probably less than the sum of its parts but Baxley knows how to direct a carchase or two. Unfortunately though, you can't help but notice that super-Aryan Dolph looks and acts more like an alien than any alien. The same is true of Rutger Hauer, another Aryan-cum-alien type. Both *Blade Runner* and the current Guinness campaign exploit this quality to the full. In *Blind Fury* he is another kind of alien—a blind Vietnam vet. Directed by Phillip Noyce who made the striking *Dead Calm*, *Blind Fury* is a peculiar little film that at least tries to rise above the usual action man clichés.

Hauer as Nick Parker may be blind or "vision impaired", as the film self-righteously reminds us, but that doesn't stop him being a martial arts expert able to wipe out everyone in sight. Or, in his case, out of it. As usual Hollywood copes with disability by over-compensating to the point of denial. In between stumbling about and wiping out baddies he is entrusted, by a little boy's dying mother, to take the kid to his father Frank, in Reno. Unfortunately, Frank, Nick's former buddy in Vietnam, is now being held prisoner and forced to manufacture drugs for the evil Macready. As with *Dark Angel*, drugs are again a rather lazy all-purpose signifier of evil.

But Parker is no ordinary macho hero and tells the kid: "A strong man isn't afraid to cry". His only problem being that he can't cry. I don't know where the myth that men don't cry came from because as anyone with a passing interest in the World Cup will have seen, grown men actually find it easier to burst into tears in public than to score goals. By the end of *Blind Fury* however, you can rest assured, Parker has got his tear ducts in full working order.

But despite all their stunts, Dolph and Rutger make uneasy heroes—their most heroic acts are also the least believable. It's as if these kind of films contain this unease by resorting to cartoon violence and cartoon representations of masculinity. Yet the very burden of portraying unambiguous masculinity becomes so heavy that the whole film feels likely to topple over at any second. In stark contrast to this excessive imagery are the films currently showing at the NFT in the imaginative series "Being a man. Images of masculinity in Hollywood".

Andrew Britton has brought together films from different eras and different genres which "are all concerned in their different ways, with the *difficulty* of 'being a man': for individual men who find themselves faced with the task of embodying supposedly *ideal* qualities which they do not possess".

In films as diverse as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Bringing Up Baby* and *Raging Bull*, Britton has sought to show how popular forms are able to "comment trenchantly and progressively on the dominant values of North American culture". The "heroes" of the films he has chosen are allowed to be sexually as well as morally ambivalent, weak as well as strong. I think it might all be a bit much for poor old Dolph.

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Opera

Figaro in nick

Ken Smith witnesses the high art of the rich in the house of despair

The time, 5pm, Saturday 14 July; the place, the Anglican Chapel in HMP Wormwood Scrubs; the occasion, the centenary, more or less, of the chapel's opening as the centre piece in Du Cane's model prison in the suburbs of west London. To celebrate the occasion, a performance of **The Marriage of Figaro**, Lorenzo da Ponte's libretto, music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, generously given at their own initiative and expense by the cast and orchestra of Pimlico Opera.

For the prison it was evidently an occasion. The audience included invited guests variously connected with the prison or the company, and 118 inmates, 73 of them lifers. About a tenth of the prison's inmate population had signed up to be there: some remands, mostly long-term men. No doubt heavies and desperados had been screened out. And no rule 43s. The word is they don't even get to go to church any more, a right enshrined in several codes of law, so bad has become the climate for sex offenders since Strangeways.

In any case it was a large-scale security nightmare, getting cast, orchestra, helpers and guests in and out, and losing no one in the process. That it happened at all in the current atmosphere of deepening fear and distrust in our prisons, post Strangeways, and given the endless war between the Prison Officers' Association and the Home Offfice, was the miracle. The rest was wonder, glimpses of worlds apart and alien to each other, one of life's stranger occasions.

Officially, the event was part of "prisoner enrichment", an initiative that came with Fresh Start, whereby the organisation of all inmate activity—work, education, recreation—came for the first time under the charge of one governor. At any rate it's an attempt to see an inmate's life as some sort of whole, or hole, presumably intended to answer the criticisms of, for instance, Sir James Hennessy, retiring Chief Inspector of Prisons in 1987, and more recently Judge Tummin, that conditions in our prisons are intolerable, and that "bored, inactive prisoners become a control risk".

In the Scrubs chapel the image that sprang to mind was the wrecked chapel at Strangeways. It was, after all, Bastille Day. This performance of civilised passions curbed, a comedy of hiding in closets and overheard conversations, where no one gets hurt and everyone ends up happily married, might have been someone's idea of an act of reconciliation, something to chalk up on God's side: weigh that one, Satan, against the alleged battle between good and evil waged on the Strangeways roof. For Pimlico Opera and for the Home Office, it was a triumph of organisation and public relations.

It took a notion by one of Pimlico's founders and present Music Director, Wasfi Kani, passing Pentonville prison on her bike one Christmas and thinking that there must be a little cheer in there, and perhaps Figaro might help, to float the idea that eventually surfaced at the Scrubs. Pimlico Opera, formed three years ago, specialises in opera performance in unusual places; these have turned out to be mostly the dramatic settings of country houses and, sometimes, banks, thus dispensing with elaborate sets and leaving them free to field a full orchestra, and sing. In these starved Thatcherite years they have presumably found a way to survive on a mix of corporate and patrician sponsorship, public and private performance.

The Scrubs performance was part of Pimlico's summer season. *Figaro*, performed with vigour and delight, is a regular feature of their repertoire. What was intriguing were the contrasts: Mozart at full flood in the bitter world of the Scrubs, for a full two-and-a-half hours of sung Italian, as the light of the summer evening dimmed through the chapel's high windows, and no one shuffled. The high art of the rich came to the house of despair, to what a former governor had termed, on resigning, a "penal dustbin". All the same, it was not the real prison. The visitors went through the gate and the sanitised area, glimpsing beyond closed wings and silence the men filing in and filing out. And Mozart. The magic was also a distraction.

Du Cane's chapel is handsomely built, a stone barn of a church, the wooden beams of its high roof an upturned ship. Its broad nave, curved chancel and altar formed the backdrop to the performance, together with the saints, mostly blue, painted by inmates in the recesses of the chancel years ago. One of them, St Jude, patron saint of lost causes, is still ripped by a blow from someone even Jude failed years ago.

Prisons have little history, and thrive on rumour and apocrypha; in prison it is always the present tense, one day much like another, the seasons and a distant release date the only tick in time's clock. Such history as the Scrubs has is mostly here, in the chapel to which, back in the last quarter of the last century, miscreants were taken from their solitary confinement to sit in single wooden cubicles to contemplate their Maker and mend their ways. Some years ago the Home Office wanted to demolish it and build more cells, but it's a listed building; the

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lifers and the POA both petitioned the Home Office against it. The plan failed. The chapel boasts a grand piano given it by Ivor Novello, who did a stretch here in the war for black market petrol. I fancy he composed on it "We'll gather lilacs in the spring again", but that's only more apocrypha.

The evening ran like clockwork, everyone on their best behaviour, the men counted in and sat in front, the public behind, the orchestra striking up at 5.00 sharp, with minimal cuts to end promptly at 7.30 to get the men back to their cells for evening bang-up by eight. The interval was non-existent. The officers around the perimeter watched the inmates, but mostly watched the performance, which was electrifying. Only one, evidently bored, attempted a cut-out crossword behind his paperwork. There were one or two empty seats, and men moved forward, closer to the action. One or two forgot where they were and lit up. Most sat rapt, following the action, laughing at the jokes. At the end they applauded, clapped, cheered, whistled in a prolonged standing ovation. Then they were counted out, back to bang-up, cocoa, the bucket in the corner, their heads full of Mozart, images of women, Figaro's passion.

Did music soothe the savage breast? I didn't get to ask. There was no contact, none to be expected. Men in prison are shy of the public, feeling they're on show, which, on such rare occasions, they are. They, and their officers, are experts at dissimulation. I know that, boredom being the base note of prison life, some

men welcome any change in the routine, anything to break the rhythm of days and nights without distinction. Inmates live for visits, letters, glimpses of the opposite gender. Of course they will come to a performance. Of course they will enjoy it, starved as they are of colour, interest, images of the outside world: they are in a government institution, institutionalised.

The problem is that, cut off from the world, they are rarely ready for it when they come out again. Too many return, between brief intervals of freedom and crime, in which we the public are often victims. Work, when they have any, is tediously repetitive. They undergo long periods of solitude, shared or not. Either's a mixed blessing. They see a film once a week, if that. On association they can watch TV, which means nothing beyond 8 o'clock, beyond soaps and game shows on a choice of two channels. For years. They have a library and many read voraciously. Many have radios. Otherwise life is thoroughly tedious, with little input, little stimulus.

Tonight was stunning and vivid, but to these men's starved imagination, more so. At the end, all I have to go with is impressions, the body gestures leaning forward, the faces watching, fingers tapping at a song some recognised, some sitting back in inner reflection in the fading light. Perhaps. Perhaps not. But more of this, that brings the inside and the outside together, if only briefly, and beyond which the music lingers, would not hurt anyone.

Summer tales

Over the summer we are publishing a season of outstanding short stories by new and leading writers. On page 24 this week we carry a haunting new story by the Canadian novelist and poet Margaret Atwood. Next week, Sue Townsend, creator of Adrian Mole, contributes a subtle love story, "The Flowers".

Jenny Diski, Janice Galloway and James Kelman are also contributing stories—and we have a few surprises up our sleeves. Jenny Diski is the author of four utterly singular novels—*Nothing Natural*, *Rainforest*, *Like Mother* and *Then Again*. Her writing has been described as "imaginative, taut, eloquent" (*TLS*), "immensely readable" (*Sunday Correspondent*) and she has earned a reputation as a novelist who "writes with enterprise and cunning" (*Observer*). Jenny Diski wrote a story, "The Vanishing Princess" for our last season in October 1989.

Then come the two Glasgow writers. James Kelman's *A Disaffection*, shortlisted for last year's Booker Prize, established his reputation as one of Britain's hugest writing talents; Alison Fell in the *NSS* wrote that he was "angrier and funnier than Beckett". Janice Galloway is an exciting new writer; her first book, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, was published earlier this year. Her story "Blood", has a remarkable physical presence; it delineates the endemic misogyny of language and power and the crushing of a young girl's sensuality.

Place a regular order for the *NSS* with your newsagent. Or subscribe now (see page 20).

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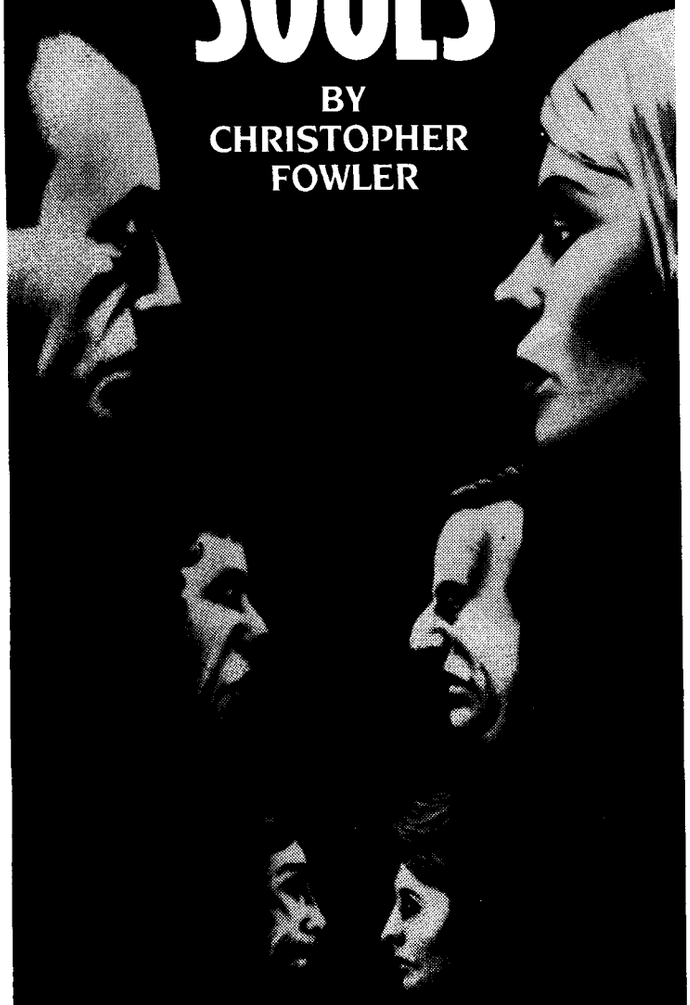

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Diary

Sense and censorship

Kathy Acker's San Francisco diary

According to not-so-recent myth and cliché, New York City is the centre of the American, if not European art world. San Francisco was the original home of the love generation, the hippies, and, a few years later, had so large a gay populace that a local magazine, in an attempt to list the gay bars in the city, named every bar outside the havens of businessmen. Today, art in San Francisco, though not in New York City, means the fight against the censorship that the United States government is increasingly succeeding in implementing.

The "Festival for Freedom of Expression" took place in San Francisco on 22 and 23 June. At the Cowell Theatre, Dennis Barrie, the director of the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, who has presented Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs in the face of the United States government's opposition, gave a talk, and Diamanda Galas at the Capp Street Project performed one of her operas. The San Francisco Art Institute, one of the most prestigious art schools in the United States, hosted two days of performances and panel discussions. Thirty-nine local artists, critics, writers, theorists, art directors, and others took part, including Jello Biafra, the lyricist and lead singer for the Dead Kennedys, whose work has often been under government fire, Dorothy Allison, a major lesbian fiction writer and poet, Linda Ellis, the director of the Museum Studies programme at San Francisco State University and concurrently an Assistant Professor in the Departments of Anthropology and Classics, and Margie O'Driscoll, the Arts Liaison to Mayor Agnos. "Culture Under Fire", the name given to the San Francisco Art Institute part of this festival, was part of "69 Hours/On-Line Against Aids", the United States cultural component of a joint alternative conference on Aids which was held on 21-24 June in San Francisco.

In 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts, the principal United States government art funding organisation was created by the United States Congress to "sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination and inquiry, but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent". In 1980, President Reagan attempted to dismantle the NEA. He succeeded in significantly decreasing its budget, Recently, in an unprecedented action, the NEA turned down the fellowships its own panelists had awarded to four performance artists, Tim Miller, Holly Hughes, John Fleck and Karen Finley. Miller is an anti-Aids activist and gay; Hughes is a politically active lesbian; Fleck, likewise, is gay; Finlay, according to the United States government, is a pornographer and, according to the art critics, a major artist and actress.

In October of last year, the Southern Exposure Gallery in San Francisco presented a show, sponsored by *Research* magazine, named "Modern Primitives". Prior to the opening of the show, Jon Winet, the gallery's director, feared that the photographs of body art would provoke trouble, especially from the government. In the event, it was not the photos, but a performance by artists Bob Flanagan and Sherri Rose about their daily sexual life that incited Dana Rohrabacher, a Californian Republican senator, to send a letter to his fellow Congressional mates. Jesse Helms, responding to the letter, persuaded the Controller-General of the Accounting Office of the United States, on 6 March 1990, to begin auditing eleven artists' organisations, including the Southern Exposure Gallery.

Art is honey, no money, no honey.

In reponse to both the Southern Exposure Gallery case and to the recent refusal of the

NEA to grant its own awards due to grounds of "content", the San Francisco Bay Area Coalition for Freedom of Expression, which includes over 250 galleries, colleges, bookstores and presses, began. They consider themselves the most active of the local coalitions affiliated with the National Campaign for Freedom of Expression. Having recently sponsored the "Festival for Freedom of Expression" in San Francisco, they are sending the head of the NEA, Mr Frohmayher, a letter in which they express their objection to his decision to veto artists' grants on grounds of content.

"You cannot appease bigots," this letter states. "There is no 'middle ground' in the struggle for freedom of expression. In singling out four controversial artists and vetoing their grants because of the artists' sexual preferences and political discourses, you have betrayed all... artists and writers...

"There is something else you apparently have not understood," the letter ends. "The attack on the NEA is a test case. If the enemies of freedom of expression are successful in restricting NEA grants on politcal grounds, they will certainly not stop there."

They haven't. Censorship is spreading beyond the aegis of the NEA. Peter Eklund, a member of the steering committee for the San Francisco Bay Area Coalition for the Freedom of Expression, told me the story of a Middle School teacher who had burned a paper US flag three days in a row in class. He had wanted his class to consider the meaning of this act.

A few days later, FBI men, arriving at the Middle School, informed the school's principal that they were going to talk to all of the teacher's students.

The principal replied that he would have to obtain the students' permission. The FBI said that if the principal refused, he would be held in contempt and liable to a prison sentence.

The FBI asked the students many questsions, not only about the teacher, but about their political and sexual beliefs.

The teacher has filed suit against the United States government.

Since the suit is pending there has been no media coverage of this event, I was not given any names.

I asked Peter Eklund whether the members of the Coalition viewed government censorship as part of a broader government position and/or strategy. Do they link the struggle against censorship to other political issues?

Eklund replied that on this matter the Coalition was divided. Some members cared only about the fight over NEA funding. Others, whom he referred to as part of the progressive left, "are so concerned with political correctness that they are scared to say anything. In this country the left has always been too divided into factions."

Eklund attributed the factionalism of the left to the individualism the pervades American life. "Our strength and our weakness is that we are pluralistic."

I then asked why the left expected a government which spends 93 per cent of its tax moneys on the military to support its art without controlling its content.

Eklund replied that he had no choice. If he and his friends admitted to desperation, they would be unable to act.

"Now that the United States government no longer has Russia as an 'enemy', it's turned inward to its own disenfranchised. The homeless; women; gays; blacks. I'm scared of the political realities of this country."

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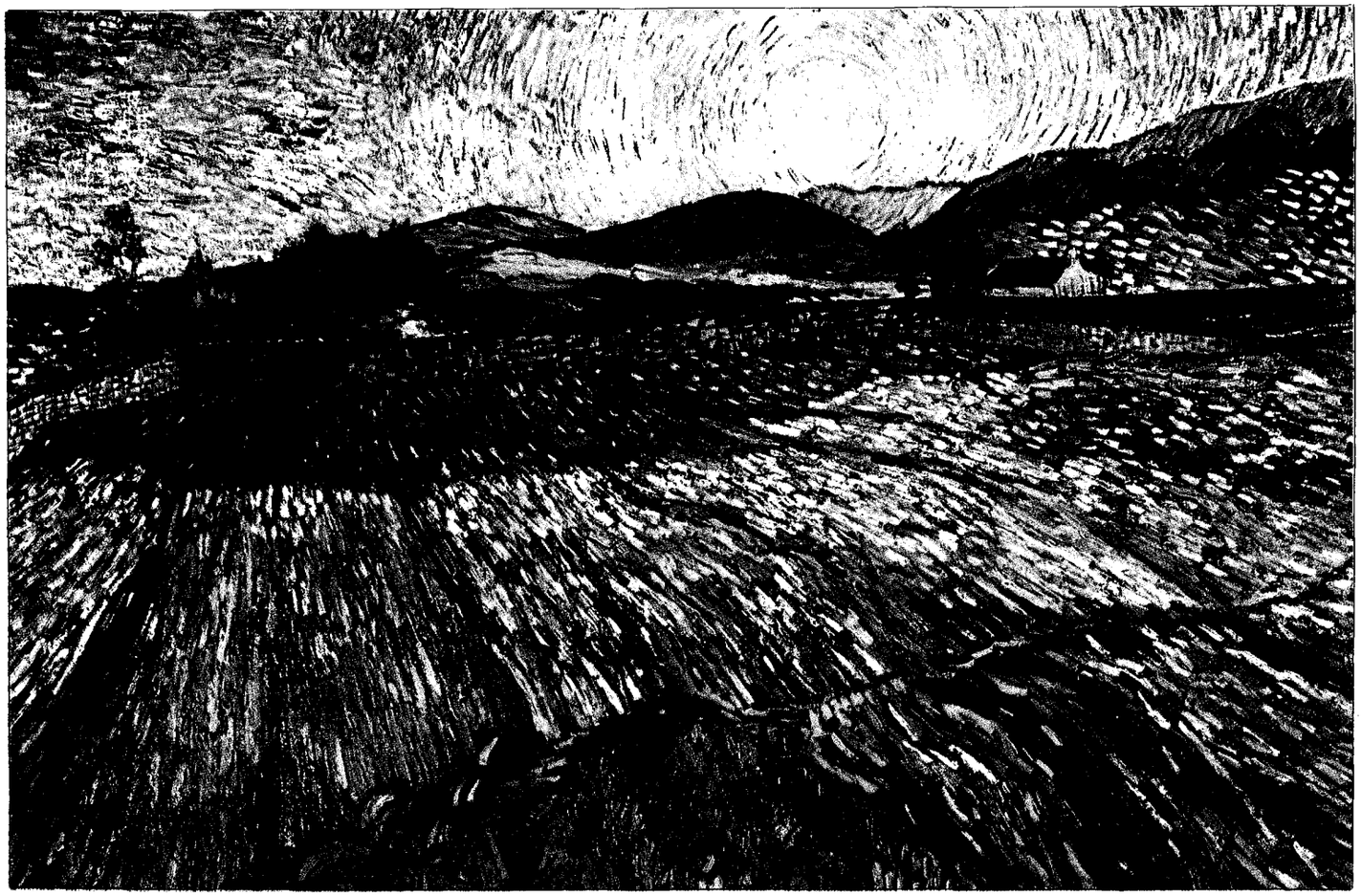

The short, not so unhappy life of Vincent van Gogh

Martin Bailey

The centenary of Vincent van Gogh's death has been celebrated with the best exhibition ever held of his work, a record price for a work of art (£50 million for *Dr Gachet*), a series of new films (including Robert Altman's *Vincent and Theo*), a boom in tacky souvenirs and a shelf-full of new books. These books provide a revealing insight into our changing perception of the world's most famous artist as well as demonstrating the new directions of Van Gogh scholarship.

The most successful of the centenary books, at least in commercial terms, is likely to be David Sweetman's *The Love of Many Things: a life of Vincent van Gogh* (Hodder & Stoughton, £17.95). It claims to be the first full-length biography for nearly quarter of a century, during which time a great deal of new material has emerged. Sweetman, a television producer, provides a comprehensive story of Van Gogh's life, beginning with his childhood, a stint as an art dealer in London, studying in Amsterdam and his dismal failure as an evangelist among the coal miners of the Borinage. As Vincent wrote to his brother Theo, "The best way to know God is to love many things", and Sweetman looks at his life from different angles, not simply as an artist.

Sweetman's achievement has been to put the extraordinary story of Van Gogh in context, giving sufficient background information but never straying too far from his life. Most valuable are the revealing thumbnail sketches of Vincent's friends and his artist acquaintances. But though the book is reasonably accurate, it is still marred by some mistakes. Ultimately, it is also a little disappointing because the author comes up with no major discoveries and few new interpretations emerge. Nevertheless as a straightforward, readable biography it is the best of the popular books.

Similar in style—and even sharing the same subtitle—is the novelist Philip Callow's *Vincent van Gogh: a life* (Allison & Busby, £14.99). Slightly shorter in length, and rather less ambitious in scope, it covers very much the same ground as Sweetman.

The two new biographies concentrate very much on Van Gogh's life rather than his pictures, and for reproductions of the works themselves the best source is undoubtedly the pair of catalogues for the centenary exhibition in Holland (distributed in Britain by Thames & Hudson, £58). The two shows, held at Amsterdam's Van Gogh museum and the Kröller-Müller museum in Otterlo, have set out to present the works which the artist considered his best. The two-volume catalogue, one of 133 paintings and the other of 248 drawings, may appear slightly austere in presentation, but the quality of the colour reproductions is excellent. The scholarly text analyses Van Gogh's *oeuvre* and the accomplishment of his ten brief years as an artist. The size and scale of the two exhibitions, which close on 29 July, are unlikely ever to be surpassed (the insurance value of the pictures was £2 billion), and the catalogue provides a lasting record.

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The most important of this year's crop of Van Gogh books is probably the most difficult to find in British bookshops. *Vincent and Theo van Gogh: a dual biography* (Fuller Publications, PO Box 7995, Ann Arbor, Michigan, £29.95) provides a feast of new information about the two brothers. Written by the Dutch-born, Canadian-based scholar, Jan Hulsker, it is enriched by the special access he was given to unpublished Van Gogh family letters. Skilfully using this material, he has filled in gaps in the story of Vincent's life and corrected many of the myths. He shows, for example, that Van Gogh started his career as an artist many months earlier than is generally assumed.

Because their lives were so closely intertwined, Hulsker has followed the story of Vincent and Theo together, presenting a great deal of new information on Theo's life: his work at the art dealer Goupil's (which had once employed Vincent in London), his marriage to Jo and his tragic death just six months after Vincent's suicide. After 30 years of studying Van Gogh, Hulsker has produced the best biography on the market; it is a scholarly work as well as a gripping read.

Another important contribution is *Vincent van Gogh: Christianity versus Nature* by the Japanese scholar, Tsukasa Kodera (Amsterdam: John Benjamins. UK distributor: BEBC, 9 Albion Close, Parkstone, Poole, £40). Kodera has made the first systematic analysis of the motifs which recur in Van Gogh's pictures (such as churches, sowers and the sun). His argument is that Van Gogh began by stressing Christian symbols, but his work became increasingly dominated by motifs from nature. Kodera's important study is evidence of the growing contribution of Japanese scholars to Van Gogh studies.

Ken Wilkie's *The Van Gogh File: a journey of discovery* (Souvenir £14.95) tells the story of how a Dutch-based Scottish journalist set out to solve some of the mysteries of the artist's life. The result is an occasionally over-sensationalist story, in which the author retraces Vincent's steps and comes up with some important discoveries. Among the delicate questions he investigates is whether Vincent suffered from syphilis and if the son of his prostitute-lover Sien was really his own child. Despite its new title, the book is only a revised version of the author's 1978 study, *The Van Gogh Assignment.*

Two of the other centenary volumes are essentially picture books, profusely illustrated but with rather pedestrian texts. Both are translations of foreign authors and now have a rather dated feel. Best of the pair is the Dutch biographer Hans Bronkhorst's *Vincent van Gogh* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £25), though it has very little on the artist's early years in Holland. Pascal Bonafoux's *Van Gogh* (Barrie & Jenkins, £19.95) is similar in scope, but suffers from a poor translation from the French.

Van Gogh led a gypsy-like existence, always on the move, and for those intrigued to track down the places where he lived and painted there is at last a useful guide. Kees Kaldenbach and Michel Didier in *Pilgrimage through Life: travelling in the footsteps of Vincent van Gogh* (Cultuurtoerisme, Wibautstraat 135, Amsterdam, £14.95 paperback) have provided an attractive and profusely illustrated book.

Any review of the Van Gogh literature would be incomplete without a mention of the new unexpurgated edition of Van Gogh's letters, published in four volumes and running to 2,254 pages. Edited by scholars at the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam, it is only available in Dutch (published by SDU in The Hague.) Although now being translated into Japanese, so far no English publisher has taken it on.

The other important source of new information on Vincent's life are the unpublished family letters, mainly correspondence from his parents to his brother Theo. These papers have now been deposited at the Van Gogh museum and, though not freely available for study, they are gradually being opened up to scholars. There are frequent references to Vincent in this correspondence, but the letters are equally important in giving us an intimate insight into the Van Gogh family. What shines through strongly is that it was a loving family, despite the anguish caused by the tragedies which befell their children.

More has probably been written on Van Gogh than on any other artist in history. Too often these books have been over-romanticised accounts in the *Lust for Life* tradition, concentrating on the dramatic ear-cutting incident after the row with Gauguin. Fortunately, many of the more recent books have gone for a more level-headed approach, stressing that Vincent's terrible mental attacks prevented him painting only for a few months of his life. Most of the time he was no "madman", but an artist who was almost obsessive in his concern to develop his craft.

Martin Bailey is the author of *Young Vincent: the story of Van Gogh's years in England* (Allison & Busby, £14.95) and *Van Gogh: letters from Provence* (to be published in October by Collins & Brown, £12.95)

Return of the thinking classes

THE ALTERNATIVE: POLITICS FOR A CHANGE
Ben Pimlott, Anthony Wright, Tony Flower (editors)
W.H. Allen £14.95

Kenneth O. Morgan

This compendium of essays, squibs and occasional poems by 34 distinguished authors from the *Samizdat* stable recalls some of the collective works of the later 1950s. Books like *Declaration* and *Conviction* then included a rich array of the leftish critics such as Paul Johnson (*sic*) and Kingsley Amis (*sic*). But they were operating in a climate of apparently endless Tory rule and an impotent left. This bracing new book appears at a time of potential transformation, with the erosion of Thatcherism and Labour again fit to govern. *The Alternative* is a genuine and stimulating attempt to wrest the ideological initiative at a moment of historic transition. After a decade of disillusion the Thinking Classes are beginning to fight back.

The authors cover many shades of the liberal left, though former pillars of the old Alliance and/or the defunct SDP predominate. The first section offers approaches to a new progressive philosophy (David Marquand, Paul Hirst, Andrew Gamble, Michael Young among others). There follows a series of treatments of policies, including the environment (Patricia Hewitt), economic recovery (Christopher Huhne), the media (Jean Seaton), social welfare (Nicholas Deakin), foreign and defence issues (Ken Booth). A final section ranges over past and present political opinions, including Peter Clarke on Lib/Lab history, James Curran and John Rentoul on party tactics, Sarah Benton on party anti-tactics and Martin Jacques on international models. There are a few bursts of moral indignation (mostly from writers such as John Mortimer and Melvyn Bragg) and a rare poetic assault on Thatcher—"Like a Stuka, a Dracula bat,/she hovers around the sky".

Inevitably, a few gaps appear—racism, feminism, Celtic nationalism and especially crime and the crucial balance to be struck between the effective protection of working-class citizens and making the instruments of criminal justice accountable and fair. But on balance this is a lively collection which certainly achieves its purpose of kindling new thought in the intellectual wasteland of the post-Wilson British left.

The main themes to emerge are clear. One is pluralism, or alternatively "associationalism", an attempt to diffuse power and decision-making in a society in which the central state has lost much of its legitimacy and 1940s "planning" much of its sheen. Another is a revived form of citizenship in which ideas of community are rescued, and bolstered by a socialised market and free access to information. Yet another is a kind of extended Europeanism as Britain searches for a viable post-imperial, post-cold-war role. Almost all agree that the familiar imperatives of post-1945 social Keynesianism lost their cogency some time during the past 25 years, certainly long before the "winter of discontent" completed the process, leaving a resolute, if ideologically empty, Thatcherism to inherit the kingdom.

Among the outstandingly interesting contributions, Andrew Gamble is admirably succinct on the changes wrought by Thatcherite hegemony; Christopher Huhne's treatment of economic policy is excellent in its precision, not least on defence cuts; Jean Seaton's intelligent essay on the media suggests a non-Calcutt strategy for safeguarding press responsibility without censorship; and Ken Booth provides a magnificent summary of the foreign and defence context in which British international policy must be reappraised.

As a suggestive statement of priorities, this book is valuable. But its problem—perhaps its weakness—is that of strategy, combined with social analysis. In this it mirrors the difficulties the non-doctrinaire liberal left has had about ends and means since Lloyd George's heyday 70 years ago. Without mobilising power and a mass base, including the trade unions (usually targets of criticism in these pages), these admirable themes will remain little more than

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putative ideas for a putative think-tank. Its advocates will resemble a seminar rather than a credible alternative concerned with government. In any case, it is the illiberalism rather than the inegalitarianism of the Thatcher era that rouses most of the critics.

There is, in fact, only one "alternative" to our present system. It is called the Labour Party, now in updated form. In some ways attempts to recreate a progressive tradition (here termed "the popular front of the mind", significantly enough) are unreal, even unhistorical. After all, in the political history of the British left, it is surely 1945 not 1906 that has been the key moment of reference, as well as being distinctly more recent. Labour's revisionist exercises will greatly benefit from the many stimulating ideas ventilated here. Certainly it must try to recapture the allegiance of the intelligentsia, lost since Attlee's time. These lively essays offer fresh insights, a palace of varieties. But in redeeming our society, pluralism like patriotism is not enough.

The world of Peter Pan

CLEVER HEARTS: DESMOND AND MOLLY MacCARTHY, A BIOGRAPHY
Hugh and Mirabel Cecil
Gollancz £18.95

Carole Angier

Oh no—I hear the lament rise from every literate home in the land—oh no, not Bloomsbury *again*. Can it possibly be worth it? Well yes, I think it is.

Desmond MacCarthy wasn't quite Bloomsbury anyway. Partly because he lived in Chelsea; but mostly because he did not become a famous artist or thinker, indeed did not become lastingly famous at all. That was his tragedy, which is told here. It's a sad story; and a salutary one, perhaps, for an optimistic time like ours, in which half of Europe is reaching out for prosperity, and we are all reaching out for peace. For it is a story, both personal and general, of failure against all odds.

Desmond's father was a banker, his mother the daughter of a Prussian aristocrat. He himself was brilliantly clever, attractive and athletic, immensely sociable, much loved. He went to Eton and Cambridge; he was an Apostle in the time of G.E. Moore and G.M. Trevelyan; Virginia Woolf said he was "the most gifted of us all".

In 1906 he married Molly Warre-Cornish, whose heritage was still more golden. Her father was Eton Librarian and Vice-Provost; her mother was an original and talented woman who "hated and eschewed the ordinary" and brought up her eight children on word games, theatricals and musical evenings. Molly's childhood was spent (to quote Virginia Woolf again)

Desmond and Molly in early marriage

in a brilliantly "communicative, literate, letter-writing, visiting, articulate, late 19th century world".

And what became of all these gifts, all this safe high civilisation? In his youth Desmond tried and failed to write a major novel. For years he planned a Life of Donne, then a book on Tolstoy, and never wrote either. Instead he became a critic, for the *New Statesman*, the *Sunday Times*, the BBC. He was a supreme talker and a superb journalist, and his criticism was imaginative, erudite and alive. But he felt himself a failure, and so did everyone else. Partly because we all agree that criticism—even for the *New Statesman*—ranks lower than original, first-order, full-length writing. And partly because his criticism, too, failed to live up to Desmond's (and everyone's) ideals for him.

His articles read less well in hard covers (say the Cecils) than they did on the day; and even in his radio broadcasts, which combined all he was best at—criticism and conversation—he somehow funked it. He had a distinctive, mellifluous voice; but when he broadcast he didn't use it. The only time his friends heard his voice was by mistake (saying, "Will you give me a glass of water?"); "the rest," said one, "though excellent, could have been anyone speaking."

There were many reasons for Desmond's failure, all well explored here. His social gallivanting, and his inability to do anything until the last minute or later; his lack of a sense of structure; his perfectionism, which stopped him before he started. But above all, he wanted too much to be liked; and he just didn't have anything special to say. His social character was his character: the man who makes the party go, the smoother of troubled waters—not a troubler of the waters himself, as anyone with a mission must be.

And it was not only his career that fell short of its promise. His marriage, too, despite his great kindness and her great love, was increasingly unhappy. The troubles were money and sex. Desmond earned so little of the first that twice their friends took up collections for them. But the real problem, it's clear (though not crudely stated here), was the second.

Molly had a breakdown before their wedding, and was afraid to sleep with Desmond after their third child. Left alone by him she briefly and reluctantly gave in to Clive Bell's notorious importunings, and lost him altogether. For the rest of their marriage—nearly 40 years—she had no physical love from Desmond, and none from anyone else either, because the only other man she loved was homosexual. Meanwhile Desmond pursued romantic sex with a series of beautiful and intelligent women who withheld it from him; until in his fifties he found one, less beautiful and intelligent, but who gave herself to him unstintingly, and with her he had a passionate affair for many years.

It's hard to know whom to feel most sorry for in this mess, they were all so lonely. In the end, I think Molly was the saddest: searingly angry and jealous, afflicted by deafness from her mid-thirties, marooned in sexlessness and silence. But almost everyone in the book (and there are many minor portraits) is very sad, after such high promise.

It made me think that their happy, rich, high-minded childhoods were a curse: making all want to do what few could—become artists; and none want to do what all had to—grow up. It made me think that homosexuality is a wish not to grow up, and understand, therefore, why so many artists are homosexuals. It made me think that this was the world Freud was right about, and Peter Pan the expression of; and that the MacCarthys were just like the Oblonskys in *Anna Karenina*, Stiva with his magical smile and poor, worn Dolly. *Clever Hearts* had evoked a whole world, and others beyond it. It was definitely worth it.

A myth for a myth

BLOOD, CLASS AND NOSTALGIA: ANGLO-AMERICAN IRONIES
Christopher Hitchens
Chatto & Windus £18

Hugh Brogan

This latest tract by Christopher Hitchens is both interesting and infuriating; unfortunately the interesting passages (roughly, the second half of the book) are not fresh enough to make up for the rest.

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Hitchens, with good reason, dislikes the mythology of the " special relationship" between Britain and the United States, and picks over the history of its absurdities with malevolent glee. He thinks it has brought out the worst in both countries, is indeed largely identical with the worst in both countries, and exposes its history as that of a distasteful sham. He has worked hard, reading extensively (if not extensively enough) and is fairly convincing in the links he makes between the America of Reagan and Bush and the glamour which the likes of Kipling, Churchill and the royal family have cast over some very mundane realities. Students of international relations will find little to surprise them, but newcomers to the subject will be entertained. As a tract, the book may be of some help in speeding the process of disarmament in Britain or America or both.

These are not tiny merits, but they are bound to be eclipsed, at any rate in the eyes of professional historians, by the frightful faults. Of these Hitchens's tone is perhaps the least important and the most tiresome. His introduction is a masterpiece of self-importance and forced indignation, expressed all too often in journalistic clichés. Hitchens had better take care or he will end up as the new George Gale or Paul Johnson. It would only take a change in his politics, and such things have been known.

But once past the introduction Hitchens sobers up, and apart from a marked tendency to condescend to everything and everybody he ceases to get in the way of his own argument, such as it is. Perhaps it had better be called his drift, for literary organisation is not the author's strong point. Still, he hits his target, and by the end every reader will be satisfied that the rituals of the special relationship are indeed as vulgar, foolish and immoral as he says.

Only there is the endlessly troubling matter of his slapdash writing, his glib inaccuracy, which amounts to a negation of scholarship. He has not taken the trouble to master the craft of history. This is not only an academic concern. Surveying Hitchens's book as a whole I find it impossible to believe that he really cares for truth. He only wants to make a case, and does not care how unfairly or irresponsibly he makes it. Such an attitude is merely barbarous, and Hitchens, who criticises so freely, should not be forgiven for setting such a bad example, one all too easy to follow. The special relationship is not the only form of pernicious vulgarity to afflict our age.

The dangers of his characteristic approach can be be illustrated by his handling of Anglo-American relations during the American civil war. This fascinating and intricate topic has been the subject of a small library of books, of which some of the most recent are among the best (for example, *Britain and the War for the Union* by Brian Jenkins). Hitchens has read only the *Education of Henry Adams* and some of the published Adams letters. From Henry Adams he takes the notion that the British government only feigned neutrality during the war and did everything it safely could to injure the North and help the South. It never occurs to Hitchens that Adams, though an intelligent eyewitness (he was the son of the American minister in London) knew much less than he supposed of what was going on, and did not understand all that he knew. Adams's half-truths are repeated in Hitchens's truculent style, and then we move on to another topic. It is a shallow, smug performance, but assured enough to be a potent source of error. At least it lays bare what Hitchens is up to: he is trying to replace one set of myths with another. It is hardly a necessary activity.

What the times need are: comprehensive research; the meticulous use of evidence to establish and criticise an argument; scrupulous accuracy; solid reflection; and an undeviating appeal to the reader's better nature. These are the marks of successful history. Hitchens, so far, displays none of them.

Objects of desire

THINGS: A STORY OF THE SIXTIES; with A MAN ASLEEP
Georges Perec
Collins Harvill £12.50

Jenny Diski

Where most novelists have characters, Georges Perec has puppets. Sad, will-less rag dolls who are motivated only by desire in the first novella in this volume, and by the lack of it in the second.

In *Things*, Jérôme and Sylvie hanker after the good things in life as they were defined by the consumerism of the early 1960s. In France, apparently, these tended to take the form of English shoes, spun-glass tumblers and neo-primitive paste jewellery. They are haunted by their modest means. Not poverty, but a lack of "superabundance—Garrard turntables, empty beaches for their eyes only, round-the-world trips, grand hotels".

But like the lists of desirable objects, Jérôme and Sylvie are no more than ciphers. They describe a social world of underachieving students who take on freelance work rather than imprison themselves in regular jobs. They become market researchers asking idiot questions of small-time consumers, while all the time feeling that they deserve more: the best that they don't, and apparently won't, have the money to buy. "Their imagination, their culture allowed them to think only in millions."

Jérôme and Sylvie, unable to face settling down, tired of petty poverty, their exactly similar friends, and with all their hunger intact, take off for Tunisia where they lead a few desolate years of non-existence before returning home and finding the minor executive jobs for which they were always destined.

It's curious, this condemnatory non-story, when you consider that only three years after its publication *les événements* of May '68 were to occur. From this distance, it looks like Perec produces a long and dreadfully repetitive tirade (it might usefully have been edited to a third of its length) that's fashionably sociological and as shallow as the faults he choses to attack.

It's true that in pinpointing the materialism of the sixties as a kind of death of the soul he makes a statement that has a relevance even for today, but the analysis stops with the description. He tells us, hardly bothering with narrative or character, how things *are*, but never goes deeper into questioning *why*. He creates a kangeroo court with his contempt without ever giving the defendants a right to speak. It's too easy, and it's dull.

It was a first novel, of course, and written at the end of that queasy period of the avant-garde French novel that 1968 blew to smithereens. Perhaps it's of no more than historical interest.

That's confirmed, I'd say, by *A Man Asleep*, the second of the two pieces. It is an essay on indifference. I suppose Durkheim would have called it anomie. I'd call it severe depression. But in those days, thanks to Sartre and friends, there seemed to be something heroic about it, and *indifference* sounds grander.

A young man doesn't get up one morning to take his final exams. He deteriorates and becomes a wilful refuser, spending his days travelling the Métro and the streets aimlessly, until, finally, there is nothing more than him and the sound of the man in the room next door.

It's all very French and long ago; written in the second person to—very likely—the same nameless character who tells the story. But Perec does write well about the infinitely tiny world of obsession and, in the end, makes his existential hero see the flaw of willed non-existence: "Indifference has not made you any different. You are not dead. You are not mad... Time, that knows the answer, has continued to flow."

If you can recollect the sixties, you'll know that's the truth.

A primitive people

WE BRITISH: BRITAIN UNDER THE M.O.R.I.SCOPE
Eric Jacobs and Robert Worcester
Weidenfeld & Nicolson £15

Colin Ward

Pollsters began by gathering facts and then moved on to gathering opinions. The last decade has brought ample evidence that government doctors the facts in order to manipulate opinion (for example, unemployment statistics in the official publication *Social Trends*). So perhaps we should be glad that there's an industry of opinion-sampling firms depending for their income on a reputation for accurate assessment of the public mood. MORI is one of these and the authors thought that a by-product of endless already commissioned polls might be a revelation of British attitudes and values.

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designed survey. They don't tell us the interesting social fact of how much it cost to get 100 interviewers to administer questionnaires to 1,448 statistically selected people all over Britain in Feb-March 1989.

They do reveal that 56 per cent of the population believe in opinion polls, while only 37 per cent believe in astrology.

I suspect that the authors knew already that we British, like any other population, are, to the irritation of every kind of ideologist, politician, parson or pollster, cheerfully capable of holding several contradictory opinions at the same time. Religion is an obvious example. Four per cent said they were atheists, another 4 per cent were agnostics, 1 per cent Jewish and another 1 per cent Muslim, and as many as 88 per cent claimed that they belonged to one Christian denomination or another. One person in five claims to be a regular church-goer.

Some curious responses came to questions about various aspects of the Christian faith, God, Sin, the Soul, Heaven, Life After Death, the Devil and Hell. It was found that, while God is not a political issue, "Labour supporters' reluctance to believe in life after death sits somewhat oddly with another belief—their enthusiasm for heaven: 64 per cent of Labour supporters believe in heaven, 4 per cent more than the supporters of any other party, but only 44 per cent believe in life after death; which means that 20 per cent more Labour supporters believe in heaven than believe there is life after death."

It's much the same with everything else. We think the unions are dominated by a handful of militants and extremists, but we also think they are essential to protect the interest of workers. The pollsters, in a country which returned three successive Thatcher governments to power, tried a quite sophisticated choice of options on the electorate and found that a majority, including Conservative voters, rejected Thatcherist values. Faced with a straight question, "we would have to say that the people have hardly moved away from whatever socialist ideals they may have held. In fact they may have moved scarcely at all."

We remain a primitive people. We care about fair play and the family but are tolerant of sex outside marriage, so long as it's the normal kind. We cherish home-ownership, car-ownership and the telephone, for family reasons. Stocks and shares don't interest us, although we know they interest *them*. What upsets us isn't so much crime, but crime involving personal violence.

It's a simple series of values mixed up with an absurd bundle of inconsequent attitudes. What a desperately vulnerable lot we are!

Innocent abroad

BERTHE MORISOT: A BIOGRAPHY
Anne Higonnet
Collins £17.50

Rosalin Sadler

For those who believe such a detail matters, Anne (Harvard and Yale) Higonnet's biography of *Berthe Morisot* is laid out in American. Sketching a passage of ideological disharmoniousness between Morisot and Fantin-Latour, Degas and Manet, Gonzalès and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, she rolls it all up with "and then everyone dumped on Puvis".

Perhaps one is displeased by this kind of thing precisely because there is a history of Americans—the feistiest people on the earth—failing in American before the French—who, on a point of honour tinged with despair, are the second most *misérable* people in Europe. Look at what happened to John Ashbery—as art critic—in consequence of his Parisian prostrations: "Like Proust, Vuillard adored his mother." And from San Francisco State University Whitney Chadwick tells us, "Impressionist painting does not acknowledge that in 1866 there were 2,768,000 women employed in non-agricultural jobs in France". Is this a Jenny Holzerism?

Better to be like Red "I'm always subdued in Europe" Grooms or Thomas Hart "Paris had left me finally in a purposeless void" Benton, and know when your're not at home.

Wherever you buy your Alice-band, it is, now, imprudent to venture on a biography of a neglected woman painter without first blooding yourself on Alison Lurie's *The Truth about Lorin Jones*, in particular if you are a woman writing about a neglected woman painter you just adore:

"Who was this woman, I came to ask myself, who had the wisdom... who doubted and struggled... who loved deeply and steadily."

The answers are scarcely less devoted than the questions. "Beneath Morisot at 21 yawned the chasm of despair and aimlessness... She could see too far into the grandeur and dangers of life not to feel at the edge of the uncontrollable."

Higonnet takes the abyss in her stride. "By the time I had finished my dissertation... I had learnt from Morisot that life and art could consolidate each other. It was a lesson about risks and self-discipline, about caring and creation... It was the story of a woman who achieved that rarest, most elegant, most durable attribute—simplicity."

This book would be impossible to read except that, fortunately, it comes with two voices. Interleaved throughout endless amounts of the above breathless all-American girlishness, is a collection of letters from and to Morisot—and private notebooks—which confirm virtually nothing of the use Higonnet puts them to. Though this means the book is crumbling as you turn it, hang on by your fingernails. You will find, in a painter of disappointing penetrative powers, a writer who possesses to a degree that melancholy which is a kind of desolation, which we know in Thomas Hardy, and which I would call an inability to dislodge a feeling of profound personal and artistic failure, despite their successes; for they both fear they weren't courageous, personally, intimately. And although they practise the art of concealment, and are acclaimed for it, they find no peace in it. At the last Hardy wrote his best poetry out of this. Morisot did not live so long—chose not to live so long?—and was never to do likewise with her canvases. Still we have the notebooks. And because of them, Morisot is wrenched free from Higonnet's artless, unlived self.

Q. Why do bright girls and boys rush into print, throwing themselves like moths at the bonfire which is another's life, before—well before—they can know whereof they speak?

Legacy of empire

BLACK MUSIC IN BRITAIN: ESSAYS ON THE AFRO-ASIAN CONTRIBUTION TO POPULAR MUSIC
Paul Oliver (editor)
Open University Press
£8.99 paperback/£29.50 hardback

Val Wilmer

When Charles Dickens journeyed to the United States in the 1840s, he came back with a memorable description of a black dancer he encountered in Lower Manhattan. He did not think to give the dancer a name, but later students have identified the man whose fancy footwork stunned the author of *American Notes* as William Henry Lane, a born freeman better known as Master Juba.

Lane took the Irish jig and, following the Diaspora process, reworked it into an African form and made it part of American vernacular dance. Six years after the publication of Dickens's memoir, Lane came to London and, within a short period, became acknowledged as the greatest dancer this country had seen. The ultimate accolade came when, in the custom of

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earlier and later black artists, he performed at the court for Queen Victoria. More importantly, by appearing in an era when white men routinely donned "blackface" to caricature "Negro" society, he was able to establish the real thing as vastly superior to scurrilous imitation.

If we may be permitted to wonder at Lane's general omission from history, it may have been because as a dancer, he did not, to quote an earlier writer, "excel at an art which had prestige". Nevertheless, the dance-steps that he left behind during an all-too-short life have become part of the British legacy, his methodology part of our musical heritage. But while he received fulsome praise from both press and audience, then as now, as this book makes clear, there was confusion among whites over what it was they were actually witnessing.

Support for black endeavour existed in the abolitionist movement in Victorian Britain, but elsewhere the presumed "natural" talent of a performer such as Lane fitted conventional stereotypes. From those days white responses to African and Afro-American music established the themes of primitivism and affectivity. As one of the contributors to this volume writes, "We have lived in the long shadow of these stock ideas ever since."

This book should be required reading for anyone who has ever snapped their fingers or dropped a stylus on a record. Black musical artists, from the days when Lane and his kind were regarded as "a jet ornament in society", have suffered trivialisation and theft while being variously co-opted into the wider culture to an extent that never can have happened elsewhere. The vast debt Britain owes to black music is apparent on every page, and if frustration results from trying to digest so much information, that is the price to be paid for refusal to give credit where it has been due in the past.

Part one assembles research on black music in 19th century Britain and on the popular concert hall stage, early encounters with jazz and Caribbean music in the context of empire. This section is in many ways more cohesive than the later chapters which consider African music, the steel-pan movement and the effect of Afro-American song forms on youth. By including Punjabi *Bhangra* and Muslim *Qawwāli*, there is an awkward attempt at comprehensiveness; though certain parallels do exist, they have not affected wider society like other forms and it is not hard to detect the publisher's hand in this.

The contradictions over perceptions of black musics continue, not least in the language employed by the contributors. One would have hoped for the banishment of such dubious terms as "ethnomusicologist" and "immigrant" when describing people of colour. And although this is about black music *in* Britain, descriptions of the "Northern Soul" phenomenon are somewhat at odds with the position taken by those writers concerned to some degree with the question of racial uplift.

Criticism of the comparative commitment of the authors is inevitable, a fact clearly understood by Oliver in assembling his almost wholly white team. As he says in his conclusion, they join him in the hope that black writers will use this work as a starting-point for more extensive research in their own communities. Until then it remains essential reading if we, the British, are even remotely to comprehend the complex meanings and messages of these rich and varied musics which are our own legacy of empire.

The Bevin plan

THE IMPOSSIBLE PEACE: BRITAIN, THE DIVISION OF GERMANY AND THE ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR
Anne Deighton
Oxford University Press £30

Denis MacShane

With the cold war over, its history becomes more fascinating. No longer required to take sides, to act as blinkered supporters of either the pro-western or pro-Soviet positions, historians are freer to inquire into causes and interventions.

Cold-war history remains important as it contains information about diplomacy, public opinion, economic interaction and relations between powers of different strength, ideology and goals, all of which is relevant to contemporary affairs.

Anne Deighton's well-researched monograph will not displace the latest Len Deighton or Joan Smith from beach reading this summer but it should be read by all who have an interest in the conduct of Britain's foreign affairs.

Discreetly hidden in academic language is a provocative thesis. Deighton argues that far from the United States squaring off against the Soviet Union after 1945, and disdainfully requiring Britain to fall into line as a loyal vassal, it was British diplomats and Labour's Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, who took the major initiatives.

Thus it was the British who first decided the Soviet Union was the enemy and Germany would need rebuilding to join a western alliance against the Red Russian Bear.

British diplomats took the lead in skilfully playing on the fears, the needs and the pride of the Americans, French and Russians until the desired end—a western alliance under Anglo-Saxon hegemony with the Soviet Union utterly excluded—had been achieved. Deighton emphasises what she calls the Bevin Plan, elaborated early in 1947, to bring about this anti-Soviet western bloc, giving to it as much importance as the better known Marshall Plan a few months later on.

If a left-wing historian had written down so boldly, 25 or even 15 years ago, that Bevin and Labour Britain were more responsible for the division of Germany, hence Europe and thus the cold war than the United States, he or she would have been treated as an ideologue rehashing a standard Marxist line.

Deighton appears not to be a Marxist and she has buttresssed her case with impressive archival research and interviews with surviving participants. However, it is written from an English standpoint and American, French, German and now, after *glasnost*, Russian historians may not be willing to accord quite such a leading role to Bevin and the Old Etonians who surrounded him in the Foreign Office.

On the other hand, her thesis may be seized by the rising forces of right-wing American neo-isolationism eager to prove that pure little America was suckered into overseas entanglements by wily British imperialists. Oxford University Press should give maximum publicity to this book on the other side of the Atlantic.

Certainly, between 1945 and 1948, accommodation with Stalin's Soviet Union was impossible but political engagement by British Labour with its sister forces of the democratic left on the continent was never even envisaged. Here Bevin's chauvinism, his patronising attitude to foreigners, can be faulted.

What is also remarkable is how short-term Bevin's view was. He really appeared to believe three key facts: first, that the British empire would last forever; second, that the United States would support or could be manipulated into supporting British economic and geopolitical aims; third, that Britain could play a leading role in Europe without being part of it.

In 1945, as Anne Deighton points out, that was how many people did see Britain—as a great power with a permanent global rank. But the task of leadership, the duty of statesmanship is surely to see beyond superficial strengths (or weaknesses) and make policy according to the real needs or capacities of a party, a country, a people.

The Bevin who failed in this task (unless one considers that British Atlanticism and anti-Europeanism since 1945 has been a success) was the man who had shown considerable foresight and long-term vision in his earlier career as a trade union leader and then wartime Minister of Labour. What happened to him in the Foreign Office after 1945? Who got to him? Were the charms of the diplomats so magical that he could never see the wood for the trees they planted in front of him?

The answer will occupy historians and biographers for decades ahead and all will be in debt to Anne Deighton's work. Right now, the Foreign Office is working its charms on today's labour leaders. For most of Mrs Thatcher's reign British embassies have been at best civil, and quite often condescending and patronising to travelling MPs from Bevin's party.

Now the residence of Her Majesty's ambassador offers a red carpet welcome to any roving trade union official, while British embassy staff cannot have too much time for a front-bench opposition spokesperson. The word has gone out: *they* (you know, the party David Owen may rejoin) might win, and we don't want trouble from them when they do. Certainly, Bevin never gave his officials any difficulties as they pushed Britain into the cold war, into anti-Europeanism and into a "Yes, Mr President" subordination to Washington.

In 1945, the élite of public-school classicists in the Foreign Office were loyal to the Labour government because a Labour Foreign Secretary was loyal to their values. Half a century later however, it will be different, or will it?

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The cost of care

For disabled people, living in "the community" means struggling with miserly benefits

Ruth Lister

It might seem odd to start a column on benefits and poverty-related issues with a social services topic: community care. The first point to make, therefore, is that social services and social security matters are often intertwined. The great majority of the users of social services are claimants. The spectre of poverty hangs over social work.

The message of recent reports is that the community care provisions of the new National Health Service and Community Care Act will stand or fall, not just on the funding made available to local authorities, but also on the adequacy of the social security system which will underpin them. This has implications for both national and local government, which have been overshadowed by the row over the postponement of the act's transfer of care responsibilities to councils.

A Policy Studies Institute report published this month comments that "one of the disappointments of the twin white papers on community care and disability benefits is the absence of any direct consideration of the role of benefits in promoting care, in either policy" (C Horton and R Berthoud, *The Attendance Allowance and the Costs of Caring*, PSI). The report looks at how a small group of people with disabilities made use of the attendance allowance, a significant piece of the social security community care jigsaw. Introduced in 1971, when 54,000 received it, the attendance allowance is now paid to over 700,000 people. It has never been made clear whether its purpose is to help meet the costs of care, or the more general extra costs associated with disability. The 1974 White Paper on disability benefits did, however, make explicit that "it is not designed to provide for the maintenance of the attendant."

Whatever its original intention, the PSI study suggests that only a minority uses it to pay for care. The struggle to make ends meet means that few are in a position to use the allowance in this way. It was found that the poorest spent the allowance on the absolute basics; those with slightly higher incomes were able to stretch the budget to cover some of the extra basic costs imposed by disability; while those with a higher standard of living were able to spend some money on "items which made living with disability more tolerable". But, the authors argue, "it was the allowance which allowed them to do that without eating into the income needed to pay for the same basics—food, fuel, clothes and so on—as everyone else was worried about."

Most of the small group who did use the allowance to pay for care had sources of income other than basic benefits, and even then the payments made were not at "market" rates. In some cases, the allowance appeared to form an indirect payment to an informal carer who had reduced her hours of work, or given up work to look after the disabled person. Another small study by Caroline Glendinning, to be published in the *Journal of Social Policy*, confirms that carers not in full-time employment are often subsidised by the benefits of the disabled person for whom they are caring. Given that the majority of carers are women, this reinforces the economic dependence which is the price, all too often, for women's unpaid care in the family.

If "care packages" are to be offered on a larger scale, their funding must be sorted out first

The Social Services Select Committee's fifth report made recommendations designed to provide carers with a reasonable independent income, pointing out that "if an even greater reliance is to be placed upon the carers as the white paper suggests, then the case for more help now is overwhelming."

The design of "care packages" is a key element in these proposals and the PSI study looked at how such packages are resourced by social security benefits in a project in Bexley. It was clear that the attendance allowance, while important, was not sufficient to meet the costs of the package. Where the disabled person or her family did not have other resources, the domestic assistance addition that used to be available under the supplementary benefit scheme was vital. Since its demise, the Independent Living Fund has been used. The long-term future of the Fund is, however, very uncertain. The lesson drawn by the researchers is that, if such care packages are to be offered on a larger scale, their funding must be sorted out first.

Two other recent reports highlight the fragility of social security support for mental health service users (A Davis and C Betteridge, *Cracking Up*, Mind publications; A Warder, M Walsh and S Becker, *Sentenced to Live Within that Sickness*, Nottingham University Benefits Research Unit). Among the problems revealed are people discharged from hospital with no money to live on and without resources to buy the basic essentials to set up a home. The conclusion reached is that "the very basis of adequate care and rehabilitation for people with mental health problems is threatened by an inadequate benefit structure."

Each of these studies demonstrates the centrality of social security to the future of community care. As local authorities negotiate for the funding necessary to implement it, they need also to lobby for a social security system which enables people to live with dignity, not simply exist in poverty, in the community.

It is fairly common knowledge that, since 1988, a growing number of income support claimants are living below the minimum income level set by parliament because they have to repay social fund loans. How many people in Great Britain, though, realise that in Northern Ireland, claimants can still be subject to compulsory deductions from benefits and wages towards the payment of public debts?

The Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (NI) was introduced in 1971 as an emergency measure to deal with the rent and rates strike waged in protest against internment. The strike was called off almost 15 years ago. No limits were set on the amount that could be deducted and no statutory right of appeal provided. In 1989, 5,500 people were subject to deductions under the act. Campaigns to revoke it have so far fallen on deaf ears. Yet, last month, Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Brooke told parliament that he would shortly be doing just that. A challenge in the High Court from Belfast Law Centre may not have been unconnected to the ministerial change of heart.

So the poorer citizens of Northern Ireland can take some comfort from the removal of one unjust law from the statute book, just as on the mainland, non-payers of the poll tax face similar sanctions. *Plus ça change.*

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For informal discussion please contact 091 386 4411
Landscape and Countryside – Tony Smith Ext 2239
Tourism – Tony Hancock Ext 2356
Application forms, returnable 3.8.90 and further details from the Director of Environment, County Hall, Durham (Tel 091 386 4411, ext 2440).
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Telephone, or write for details to:

MNDA, P.O. Box 246, Northampton NN1 2PR. Tel: 0604 22269.
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Ref: 10/93/NSS

Application form from and to be returned to, Social Services, Departmental Personnel Unit, Willing House, 356/364 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8BH. Tel: 071-837 5621 (ansaphone)

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Further details of the post and an application form can be obtained from: Mrs Joy Smith, BIFU, 1B Amity Grove, Raynes Park, London SW20 OLG, telephone: 081-946 9151. Completed applications should be returned by Friday, 27 July.

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The Unit is part of the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University and is both a centre with its own research staff and a base for visiting research workers. The post, to be vacated in 1990 by the retiring Executive Director, Dr P L Loveday, is for full-time research and administration.

The Executive Director will be expected to initiate new social science research programs on Northern Australia and to direct the academic and administrative work of the Unit. A PhD in a social science discipline with subsequent interdisciplinary experience or training in social or natural sciences is essential and experience in academic administration and research management would be desirable. A familiarity with the problems of land use policy and management would be an added advantage.

Appointment will be at Senior Research Fellow, Fellow or Senior Fellow level for 5 years in the first instance, with the possibility of extension to 10 years, subject to satisfactory review of performance at the end of the fourth year of service. Secondment will be considered.

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Closing date: 17 August 1990. Ref: PacS 3.7.2.

SALARY: Senior Fellow; A$51,015 - A$59,213 p.a.; Fellow; A$38,410 - A$50,950 p.a.; Senior Research Fellow; A$45,729 - A$54,255 p.a.

Applications should be submitted in duplicate to the **Registrar, The Australian National University, GPO Box 4, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia,** quoting reference number and including curriculum vitae, list of publications and names of at least three referees. The University reserves the right not to make an appointment or to appoint by invitation at any time. Further information is available from the Registrar.

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Bridge Street, Walsall WS1 1ET
***Telephone:* (0922) 29861**

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PROFESSIONAL MAN, 40s. seeks intelligent and sensuous woman for country walks, cultural pursuits, and the pleasures of intimate friendship. Yorkshire. Box (28) 351.

WOMAN, 52, seeks highly educated man: with main concerns intellectual: main interests philosophical: main purpose understanding; and only criticism, truth. Box (28) 352.

PROFESSIONAL WOMAN, LIVELY, responsive, divorced, grown-up family, wishes to meet compatible man, 50s-60s, to share warm, relationship and varied interests: music, walking, travel etc. London, Home Counties, but mobile. Box (28) 353.

BECALMED IN SE3. Leftish, greenish woman, 37, less romantic, but also less intense than in 20s, seeks nice man with sense of humour for evenings out etc. Please write Box (28) 354.

1930s MODEL—LONG CHASSIS Plenty of power under bonnet. Maroon, rust free, many extras, one lady owner driver until 1985. Briefly tried out by lady doctor. Absolutely safe, reliable, fully responsive, fun to handle. Garaged in South Herts, available to unencumbered professional lady. Visits to gardens, theatres, restaurant, valeting and cherishing. Not on serious offer until now. Box (28) 343.

FIFTYSOMETHING. N.W. Woman seeks non-fossilised man to walk with and to share aspects of the nineties. Box (28) 344.

IDEALIST, DIVORCED MAN, FORTIES. Unready for commitment seeks happy sexual relationship with bright, lusty woman. London/South, wherever you like. Box (28) 345.

UP NORTH. Woman writer, American, 46, ready for new, strong, new self-aware man. Write to: Box (28) 346.

FRENCH LADY, 45, seeks partner to share cost buying house in France (Loire/Dordogne/Provence). Planning viewing September. Write to Box (28) 347.

PROFESSIONAL WOMAN (MID 30s) likes warm bars, cold drinks, jazz and cricket, seeks man 30-45 for adventures, cinema, theatre, eating out, travel etc. Have car? So travel! (West Midlands) Please reply to Box (28) 348.

I'M IN THE MIDLANDS and in the doldrums. I'm 51, slim, female, accounted attractive by some and presentable by all. Is there a man who could appreciate having a theatre, pub or concert companion as much as I would? Box (28) 349.

Appeals

SOIL EROSION RESEARCH ANNOUNCEMENT Highly innovative black research student (Cranfield Institute of Technology) with British background seeks assistance towards fees for 2nd and 3rd years of doctorate research into soil erosion (of special relevance to road transportation and also applicable to agricultue in tropical climate). Has been refused assistance from SERC despite having M.Sc degree, four years' work experience in West Africa and good references from tutors. Applied research likely to lead to savings of natural and economic resources in the Third World and make important contribution to efforts to conserve the earth's most basic non-renewable natural resource. Assistance welcomed from ethical businesses, trusts, philanthropists. For details and references, please contact: E. C. Kamalu, 48 Lealand Road, London, N15 4RU.

Booksellers

SCARCE BOOK SERVICE. Hammersmith Books, Liffords Place, SW13 9LR. Phone 081 876 7254 (24hrs).

Personal

GALLANT KNIGHT AND LADY, valiantly fending off Lords of Chaos, seek mature damsel to tread a measure through island life amidst cows, sheep, dogs amateur drama, the arts, antiques and mud. Box (28) 355.

Accommodation

CENTRAL LONDON, BAYSWATER, W2. Quality, 1 bedroomed apartments, serviced daily. Sleeps up to 4 people. Minimum stay one week. Telephone: 071 727 0352

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VOLUNTEER NOTICE BOARD is a free service provided by New Statesman & Society with financial assistance from Thames Television's Help programme. Interested organisations are invited to send their copy (approximately 45 words) to Dawn King at New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London, E2 8DQ by Friday preceding publication date. Please note this service is for recruiting volunteers only. If you have salaried vacancies contact the Classified Department on 071-739-1645.

THERE ARE STILL A FEW places left on our projects in July and August to work in a group with others from the UK and overseas. Our projects run from 1 to 3 weeks all over Britain on playschemes, manual work, social needs etc. Contact Quaker International Social Projects on 071-387 3601 ext 255 for details.

A VOLUNTEER IS REQUIRED (Sutton Coldfield, W. Midlands). Fit girl with caring personality to assist spinal cord injured young lady solicitor dependent on a wheelchair. Duties – personal care eg. help washing, dressing, toileting, getting-up/going to bed. Some cooking and general help. Experience not essential. Free accom. and living expenses of £40.50p p/w. Live in own room. Hours to be agreed with other volunteer working on a shift system. Placement 4-6 months + starting September. For further details and a full profile contact 021-354 8646.

SAVE THE CHILDREN: Wessex Walks Committee are seeking three enthusiastic walkers to undertake major review of walk routes to the cathedral cities of Wells, Salisbury and Winchester. Each year, 5500 children and adults raise over £100,000 for Save The Children through sponsorship, walking 24 routes into these cities. The routes need to be rewalked and route sheets updated. Contact David Davies, Higher Hannaford, Poundsgate, Newton Abbot, TQ13 7NX. Tel: 03643 411.

ST BOTOLPH'S CRYPT Centre for Single People in Housing Need requires volunteers now to help with our evening centre Mon – Thur evenings 6 - 8 pm. Contact Lucy Firth or Daly Maxwell for further details.

CHILDREN'S CAMP: We need volunteers aged 18 yrs + to help run a camp for 'highly strung' inner city children aged 13 - 16 years, from 24th to 31st August, 1990. For more details and an application form, write to: Mr R F Mills, Fern Street Settlement, Fern St, London E3 3PS.

INDEPENDENT LIVING Alternatives promotes independence for people disabled in the form of a volunteer partnership. Volunteers provide physical support in return for free board and lodgings + £40 p/w. We urgently need initiative, contact us at: Independent Living Alternatives, Fulton Hse, Fulton Rd, Empire Way, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 OTF. 081 902 8998 ext 270.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: Article 19, the International Campaign Against Censorship, is looking for bright, enthusiastic volunteers to help in our busy campaigns/publicity department. An excellent opportunity to become involved in important campaigns on a number of countries worldwide. Day and evening work. Based near London Bridge. Travel and meal allowance provided. Call Helen Darbishire on 071-403 4822.

BONDWAY NIGHTSHELTER, an emergency provision for homeless men, requires volunteers (aged 18-30) to work for approximately six months. An allowance and accommodation provided. We recruit throughout the year, so welcome applications from those wishing to be considered at a later stage. For further details contact please contact: Volunteer Coordinator, PO Box 374, London, SW8 1SJ and enclose S.A.E.

THAMES HELP

Thames Help, presented by Jackie Spreckley, is a four minute local social action programme. It appears four times a week on Thames Televison at 5.55 approximately (check TV Times for details). Here is a summary of this week's programmes.

This week THAMES HELP is looking at some of the popular and more unusual ways we can all take sporting break from London's summer madness. Together with the Sports Council and Sportsline we can put viewers in touch with the sport that takes their fancy.

MONDAY 23RD JULY 1990

Tonight we meet Pamela Nurse, a 27-year-old fashion stylist, who is one of the one in three Londoners who cannot swim. We look at her progress at an adult swimming lesson in Barnet.

For details, phone Sportsline on 071-222 8000

TUESDAY 24TH JULY 1990

Mention croquet and you think of cucumber sandwiches and country mansions, you do not think of Bethnal Green. Tower Hamlest introduced the game into a local park last year and tonight we investigate claims that croquet is taking the are by storm.

For details of your local croquet club phone Sportsline on 071-222 8000

WEDNESDAY 25TH JULY 1990

Peter Pearce is a British Champion of the fast growing, but little known, para-Olympic sport of Boccia. When he is not training to become world Boccia champion, Peter spends his time introducing the game to schools and day centres. We investigate the game that's capturing the imagination of people with disabilities all over the country.

Phone Sportsline for details about Boccia on 071-222 8000

THURSDAY 26TH JULY 1990

With Wimbledon fresh in our memories the tennis courts of London are full of people trying to emulate their tennis heroes. However, few experience the thrill of the 20 shot rally when we realise that tennis is much harder than it seems on the television. We investigate a version of tennis anyone can play well—short tennis.

For details of tennis in London, phone Sportsline on 071-222 8000

THAMES TELEVISION

Thames Help, Thames Television PLC, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9LL. Telephone: 01-387 9494.

THE PARKINSON'S DISEASE Society, through its local branches seeks to help sufferers with the problems arising from the affliction and to provide funding for medical research to find a cure for the disease. Our branches need volunteers to help in this vital work. Contact Rodney Wolfe Coe 081-852 4337

GLASGOW SIMON Community offers time, friendship and supportive group living to long-term homeless women and men, especially regular rough sleepers. We need full-time, live-in volunteers who can stay for at least 6 months, preferably a year. Full board, plus a weekly and a holiday allowance. Contact Chris Lytton, 133 Hill Street, Glasgow, G3 6UB for details. Telephone: 041-332-3448.

FAMILY COURTS SERVICE are looking for volunteers to help run two Saturday Access Centres in South London where divorced or separated parents come to spend time with their children. If you are interested please give us a ring: 081 672 2682/8812.

IF YOU ARE between 16 - 20 years old with some time on your hands this summer, the Belfast/Islington teenage scheme would like to hear from you. Offering sun and adventure in London and in Ireland doing community work for 10 days July and 2 weeks August. Call Mo 071-704 9563 or Jackie 071 281 6930.

WOMEN VOLUNTEERS ARE needed to work with homeless people at our emergency, short-stay hostel based in East London. We need women who can give up some of their time, during the day, to help with the smooth running of the hostel. We are also in need of volunteers to help run a "Women's Drop-In" on Fridays between 11am and 2pm, where we run activities and cook food for the homeless women that use the drop-in. For more information, contact: Jacqueline Spark, Volunteer Coordinator, Providence Row Housing Association, 50 Crispin Street, London E1 6HQ. Phone: 071-247 4030

VOLUNTEER PIANIST needed at Sefton House Home for the Elderly, Burscough, Lancashire. We have a good piano, itching for its ivories to be tickled—can you come and play sing-a-long songs for us once a week—once a month? All expenses paid. Interested? Ring Barbara Evangelista at Sefton House, Burscough (0704) 892203, or Barbara McLaren (0772) 264199.

CARE IN ACTION Lothlorien (Rokpa Trust). We require caring, hard-working residential volunteers to share their life and experience with people who have mental health problems. We are a small community in a beutiful rural setting in South West Scotland. We have flourishing, organic vegetable gardens, wood lands, workshops and a very relaxed atomosphere. For more details contact: Jane Dewar, Lothlorien, Corsock, Castle Douglas, DG7 3DR.

BLACKLINERS HELPLINE, a helpline, counselling and support service run by volunteers for black people who are HIV positive or have Aids, based in Brixton, south London, really welcomes volunteers from the black and Asian communities to train as helpline and face to face counsellors and buddies. Very worthwhile and stimulating work helping others in the community. If you are interested, call Arnold Gordon on (071) 738 5274 for more information.

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Carole Angier's critical biography of Jean Rhys will be out this autumn. **Martin Bailey** is a reporter on the *Observer*, specialising in the arts. He is the author of two books on Van Gogh being published this year. **Hugh Brogan** is Reader in History at the University of Essex. **Ros Coward** is the author of *The Whole Truth* and a forthcoming book on Germaine Greer. **Jenny Diski**'s latest novel *Then Again* is just out from Bloomsbury. **R W Johnson** is a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford. **Ruth Lister** is Professor of Social Studies at Bradford University. **Kenneth O Morgan** is Principal of University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. His forthcoming book is *The People's Peace: British History 1945-1989*, Oxford University Press. **Denis MacShane**, a former NUJ president, has recently completed a PhD on international labour and the origins of the cold war. **Paula Reed** is fashion editor on the *Sunday Correspondent* and contributes to *Elle* magazine. **Rosalin Sadler** is an Australian writer living in England who regularly writes for *Modern Painters*. **Robert Service** is Reader in Russian History at London University. **Ken Smith** is the author of *Inside Time*. His forthcoming book *Berlin Coming in from the Cold* will be published by Hamish Hamilton in November. **Colin Ward** is the author of *Child in the Country*, just out from Bedford Square Press in paperback. **Val Wilmer** writes about jazz and other black music.

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ENDGAMES

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 3134 Set by E O Parrott
Extracts from *1066 And All That*, updated to include the Thatcher decade.

Report by Tom Foolery
The weather has addled your brains, I fear. I've had more laughs reading Paul Johnson. £10 per winner.

Margaret Thatcher (neigh Roberts) was the daughter of a Grantham mare. She became Britain's first female Prime Minister, which was considered at the time to be a Good Thing (especially by Mrs Thatcher). She immediately divided the country into two parts (or parties): the Right (or Thatcherites) who were always Right, and the Left (or Loonies) who were always Wrong. She also divided her own party into two: the Wets and the Dries. The Wets were banished to the back benches or distant Heathlands, until they dried out. The Dries were rewarded by weekends at Chequers.

Although she scored a victory in the Battle of the Falklands against Argentina (who were without Maradona at the time), she frequently lost to the EEC by as much as 11 to one. As a result England was forbidden to play in Europe. She refused to fund a high-speed rail link to the Channel Tunnel, maintaining it would ruin Kent, the Garden of England, and upset grass-roots Lawn Order.

Mrs Thatcher instituted several radical reforms, including a decree that all football hooligans should be seated. She was, of course, True Blue to start with, but later turned Green on learning of the low Tory ratings in public opinion polls. She then introduced a Gallup Poll Tax or Impunity Charge, and knee-capped everyone who refused to pay it.

Stanley J Sharpless

When the Social Compact expired, it was the Conservatives' turn to rule again. However, the Party had been secretly taken over by Mrs Thatcher (the Iron Duke) so things were *never the same again*. In a series of brilliant attacks, Mrs Thatcher conquered the Falkland Islands, the Trade Unions, the Teachers, the Falkland Islands, the Councils, the Homeless, the Conservatives, the Militants, the Owenites, the Communists, the BBC, (which she exposed as a branch of Labour Party, a minor faction of the Communists), MI5, MI6, M25, the Falkland Islands, and dogs. While assuring everyone that this was a Good Thing, she remained unsatisfied, declaring, "We must begin to conquer Inflation; that is the real enemy." As there was now no Opposition, she was able to pass the Democracy Act 1991, making the House of Commons hereditary. She was thus proved right in her favourite motto, "We shall never run out of steam."

D Ken Bidford

1. Explain and set in context:
a) Gotcha! b) On your bike! c) 'Ere we go! d) Economical with the truth
2. Distinguish vaguely: a) Tax break b) Sweetener c) Bribe
3. Interpret the political significance of either: a) Salmonella and curried eggs b) Bovine spongiform encephalopathy and Argentine beef
4. If the family silver is worth £10,000, is sold for £5,000 and then rented back to the sideboard at £500 per annum, calculate the advantage.
5. Discuss the supremacy of Parliament with particular reference to answering questions for about half an hour twice a week.
6. "If Wright was right he was romantic." Consider the relevance of this hypothesis to National Security. (Be careful)
7. Rank carelessly in order of reliability: a) Prime Ministerial off-the-cuff answers to questions b) Bernard Ingham's unattributable jeux d'esprit c) A ministerial statement d) An authorised leak e) An unauthorised leak f) A Welsh leek g) A *Sun* editorial
8. Write a short dialogue about the Channel Tunnel between any two of the following: a) *Un renard rabid* b) a train-spotter c) A person of Kent (or Kentishperson) d) A mad cow e) Broody Mary of Calais f) The Chairman of P&O Ferries g) The Lord Warden
9. "We are the people of England and we have not spoken yet." G K Chesterton. Discuss with reference to either the Community Charge or the NHS.
10. "Anyone for Denis?" (Candidates need answer this question.)

John Stanley

No 3137 Set by E O Parrott
The important thing on holiday is to impress your fellow travellers. Give us remarks or ploys for holiday oneupmanship. By 2 August.

GRAFFITI BY PAIGE

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WEEKEND CROSSWORD

Crossword 1633

PRIZES: £5 book tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1633, New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ by first post Monday 30 July

ACROSS

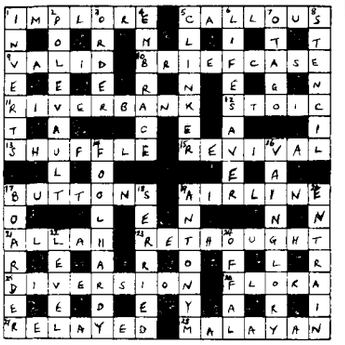
1. Two things to do with a boot when there is something left in the glass (7)
5. Home for stray Tabitha (7)
9. Meanness makes minors suffer revision in wages (9)
10. One appears in something dark with a headdress (5)
11. It is a matter of chance if you have a drink with a politician (8)
12. Sad sitter in disguise (6)
14. Philosopher joins king and worker (4)
16. Old radio programmes make one stop reading (10)
18. Bird has to phone admirer about piano (10)
19. After a quiet start these diseases provide their own cures (4)
22. Lowlying areas one discovered in maps (6)
23. Extreme self-interest of an Arab in a backward era (8)
26. The final one found in some gardens (5)
27. Pole puts flower on flowers (9)
28. Informer who returns with a story told in a bar (7)
29. Rise and turn into a fish (7)

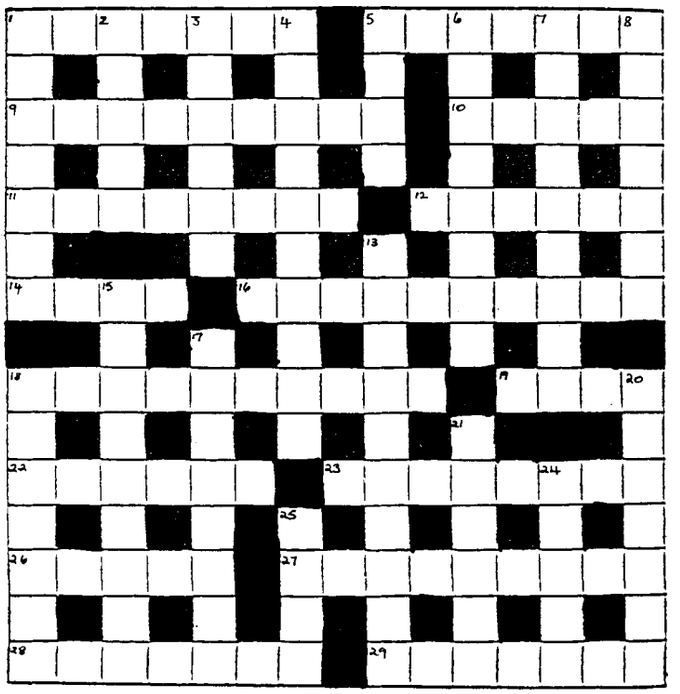
DOWN

1. Without the boot the fabric makes one jump (7)
2. Strange characteristic of oriental lake (5)
3. Dances in the streets of Mayfair behind the Turk's Head (6)
4. Instrument which is not a vehicle for the amateur (10)
5. Sign of fervour in Wales (4)
6. This will cover one up although discovering both bare (8)
7. A lot stood about although this looks like a seat (9)
8. The magazine is about to get enthusiastic for holiday topics (7)
13. Where a bird is given something to drink from (10)
15. It is plain Nero fiddles without equal (9)
17. Mine begin with players (8)
18. One who oversleeps is given the rope, but if it is pulled one may survive (7)
20. A bit to steal (7)
21. As an entertainer the artist rises without inspiration (6)
24. British institution which would help to give China a finer future (5)
25. Remote as an unfinished place in the country (4)

Prizewinners to 1631:
Congratulations to **E N Gordon, David & Catriona Grigg and A L Morgan,** and indeed all who answered the clues correctly, despite the incorrect grid, and who sent in the solution regardless of the wrong closing date!

Solution to 1631





SCHOOL PRINTS

Harbour — *Julian Trevelyan*

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